THE COUNTRY ROUND PARIS

(ILE-DE-FRANCE)

By EDMOND PILON

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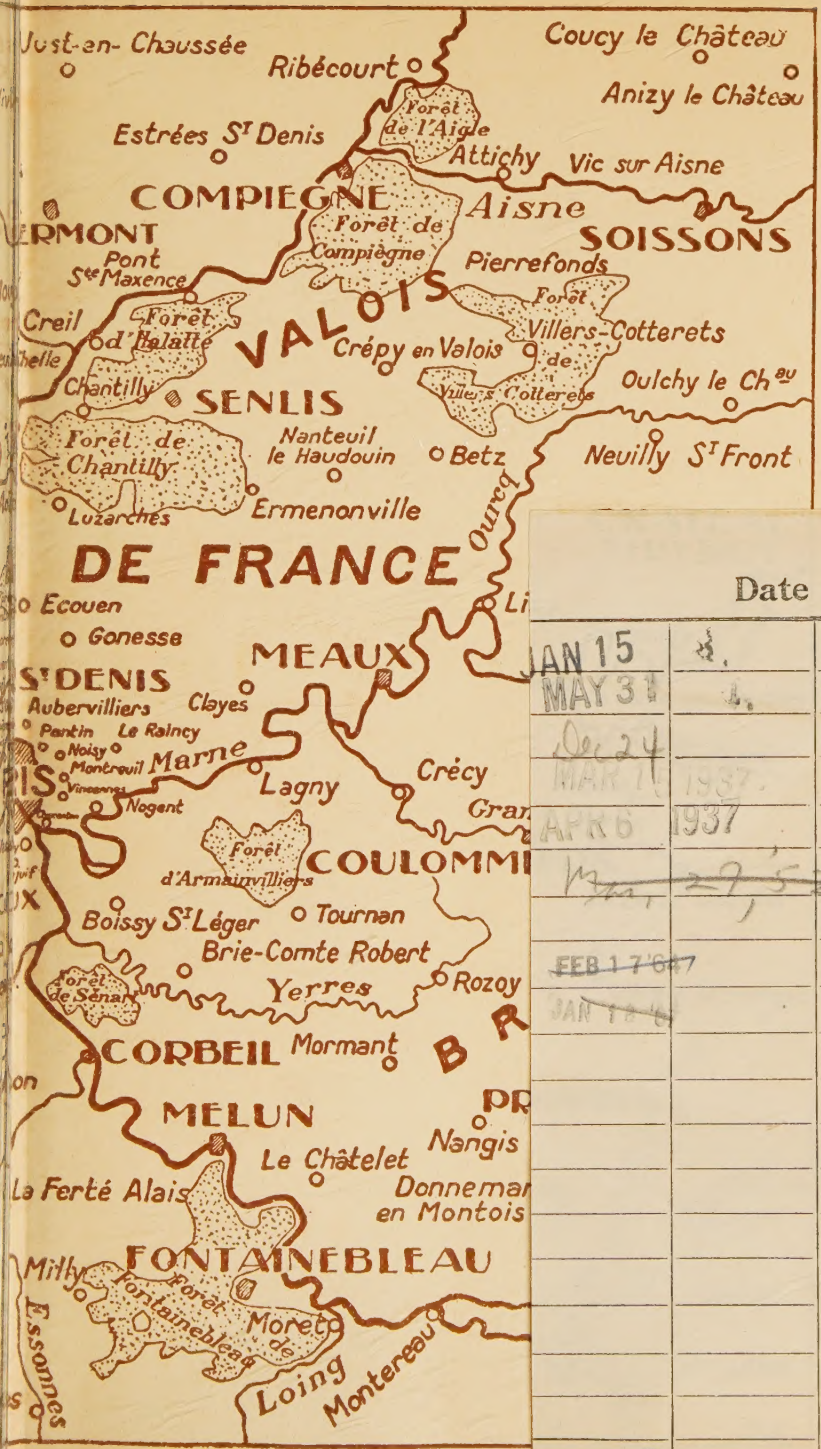

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To Gabriel FAURE

Versailles. In the Gardens.

In the heart of the Ile-de-France. La Cité.

CHAPTER I

General Survey.

> " Anthinea *first made me think of writing a treatise on the analogy between the Valois and Parisis and the purest Attic. There is no land within the borders of* Anthinea *of fairer growth than the soft yet vigorous country of a Jean Racine, a Voltaire and a La Fontaine.* "
>
> Charles MAURRAS.

ONE of the writers who has best characterised ancient France and shown how it was built up province by province — I allude to Michelet — justly observed that it is " between the parvis of Notre-Dame and the steps of the Sainte Chapelle " that we must look for the origin of that dazzling wit, that racy humour and that touch of sly and lively mockery by which we may recognise a Molière, a Boileau or a Regnard.

To these names Michelet adds that of Voltaire, and we are glad of it. For a long time, indeed, there was a dispute as to whether Voltaire was born at Châtenay, near Sceaux, or actually in Paris. As for Molière, we know he had a house at Auteuil, and so had Boileau, as well as one at Crosnes in the valley of the Yerres. Regnard owned the chateau of Grillon, near Dourdan, besides his house in Paris.

Thus, growing out of the little island of the Cité, moored like a ship between the banks of the Seine for centuries past, we already obtain a wider view of the Isle of France *(Ile-de-France)*. At the same time, the idea of an island is doubly apparent : firstly in the Cité of Paris, and then in the larger province, which is in very deed and truth an island, as any atlas will show, starting from that of Coulon, illustrating the Rivers of France, and published in the 17th century : " It is called the Isle, because it is surrounded by the rivers Seine, Marne, Oyse (Oise) and Aisne ".

The great geographer of our own time, Auguste Longnon, expresses himself in similar terms, except that he closes the loop thus described by adding the Tève, a tributary of the Oise, and the Beuvronne, a tributary of the Marne; only the political boundaries of the Government (or military area) of the Ile-de-France, as it lasted up to the Revolution, were more extensive than those described by the geographers. Besides French Brie (la Brie française), the Goële with Dammartin, the region known as France (Saint-Denis-en-France, Roissy-en-France) and the Valois, stretching as far as the Laonnois and the Beauvaisis, it included the French Vexin, the Mantois (with Mantes), the Pincerais (with Poissy), the Drouais (with Dreux), the Yveline (Saint-Léger-en-Yveline, Rambouillet), the Hurepoix (Dourdan, Limours, Longjumeau), and lastly the Gâtinais, formed of woods, marshes *(gâtines)* and heaths, the region of Bière (Chailly-en-Bière), Fontainebleau and its forest, the whole bounded and enclosed, as an island should be, by a blue line of rivers : the Epte, between the French and Norman Vexin, the Eure, between the Yveline and the Drouais on the one hand and the Beauce and the region of Chartres on the other, and lastly the Voise, a tributary of the Eure, the Orge, the Juine, the Essonne, and the Loing. Nor are certain geological affinities lacking, an allied system of water-courses, and lastly, complementary methods of stockbreeding and farming : cereals

almost everywhere, but wheat more especially in Brie and the Hurepoix, towards the region of Chartres; cattle in Brie again, apples in the Vexin, honey in the Gâtinais, vegetables in the Parisis and at Arpajon, vineyards at Thoméry, the little *chasselas* grape at Fontainebleau, peaches at Montreuil, and next, between the two green valleys of the Bièvre and the Yvette, strawberries and yet more strawberries, in such quantities that on certain days in summer the air is heavy with the fragrance of berries, a warm fruity sweetness fit to intoxicate the bees!

And what shall we say of the air itself? It may indeed be said that this subtle atmosphere, at times veiled by clouds, but most often fair and clear, is characteristic of this pleasant land, this Isle of loveliness. And permeating this air, lending it, if possible, hues still more iridescent and pearly, there is the light, which clothes all things with brightness and lends the limpidity and delicacy of crystal to the song of the poet and the picture of the painter. The native of Touraine or Champagne who comes from his province to the Ile-de-France and breathes its air, finds in it some of the quality of his own native atmosphere, something subtly smiling, with a gentle, mischievous grace. Thus as a young man from Champagne, La Fontaine loved to see the twilight fall over Versailles, when the blending of " that flaxen grey, that hue of dawn " as the sun sets behind the woods of the Trianon or the Grand Canal stirred him by its enchantment. The same was afterwards true of Watteau at Nogent on the banks of the Marne. As for Corot, he has revealed the secret of these subdued harmonies, these opalescent tones and delicate shades, not only in those of his works which were inspired by the Ile-de-France — for instance, his views of the ponds at Ville-d'Avray and his fine *Souvenir* of Mortefontaine, but also in his prose works, in which, writing in a classic style, he has succeeded in expressing the radiation of their celestial tones, their atmospheric quality, and play of light, — that atmosphere, in short, in which Poussin perhaps discovered the secret of his ineffable blues, Lépine and Sisley the pearly softness of their drifting clouds and dreaming waters. " To get inside these landscapes, " noted Corot on the margin of one of his sketches, " one must at least have the patience to wait for the mist to rise. One only enters into them gradually, and when one has got there, one should be happy there ".

Saint-Sauveur.

There are any number of views for those who wish to " see the mist rise ", to discover through the rents in its veil the Ile-de-France in its setting of wood and river, and to look on as the countryside awakes in the morning. Sometimes, as at the Mont Valérien, when the veil is rent it discloses the splendid val-

Ville d'Avray. The Corot Memorial.

Evening in the Ile-de-France.

ley of the river, with its wooded curves, and the mighty horizon of Paris. The triple bend of the Seine then appears dotted with islands, " the finest prospect in the world ", to quote that ethereal genius Gérard de Nerval. As for the view which stretches before us as we stand above Le Pecq, on the terrace of St. Germain, it may be added that there are not many in the Ile-de-France so extensive as this. And indeed, from this terrace we may perceive the wooded heights of Marly, Louveciennes, Bougival, Rueil and even beyond; but there are also wide and charmingly varied landscapes to be seen from Malabry, above the Vallée-aux-Loups, from the mills of Sannois near Argenteuil, from the church tower at Montmorency, looking towards the valley of that name, from the plateaux of Hautie in the Pincerais, not far from Triel, or from the Ermitage Saint-Sauveur overlooking Mantes and the surrounding region.

At the spot where the Oise joins the Thève, in sight of Boran, not far from Royaumont, one can have no better view of its capricious windings than from the top of the promontory on which is situated the Forest of Carnelle, which can be reached from Viarmes. From Cuvier-Châtillon in the Forest of Fontainebleau, from the Point de vue Saint Michel in the Forest of Marly, the eye can discover still more lovely forest views, thanks to the clear air and radiant light. But both air and light have a still more melting transparency, and all things — water, trees and plain — become as unsubstantial as some celestial scene at that spot where, from the aqueduct of the Nord railway, the traveller's eye perceives between Orry-la-Ville and Chantilly the ponds of Commelle, the little Château de la Reine Blanche, the groups of willows along the Thève — in short a view in which the transparent atmosphere, the dim, subtle and silvery tones, are like those imagined by a Gluck or a Watteau in the *Orphée* or the *Embarquement pour Cythère*.

But from these points of view, which are more frequent than one would suppose in the Ile-de-France, one sees not only the swelling plains, richly tilled fields and cool meadows, their varied hues set off against a background of emerald; one sees not only the rivers, but also the roads. " Could anything be more splendidly ordered ", asks M. Jean Bonnerot in his *Les Routes de France*, " Could anything be more majestically harmonious than these roads radiating from Paris like a crown of glory ? " We know their origin : either they were well-planned Roman

roads, or the highways restored by Brunhild *(chaussées Brunehaut)* driven straight through woods, fallows and heaths. Later on there were the *pavés du roi* (king's highways). These elm-fringed avenues, called " Rosnys " after the estate of Sully, who had ordered them to be planted, prepared the way for the great commercial or strategic roads of modern times; and these in turn, in the course of centuries, have become so many arteries leading out of the Ile-de-France in every direction, and connecting the heart of Paris with the great body of the nation.

It is sometimes by following these roads, sometimes by skirting the banks of the rivers, sometimes even by asking the aid of the railway, that we may reach all the lovely, smiling spots in a region where the hamlets and towns so often have names reminiscent of spring, beauty and grace : Beauté-sur-Marne near Nogent, Plaisir not far from Grignan, Marnes-la-Coquette, Mantes-la-Jolie, Neuilly-Plaisance, and finally, on the borders of the Vexin and the Mantois, Wy, known as Joli-Village. Their very names cannot fail to delight our hearts and souls like a melody, and guide us on our way like so many charming spirits. Everything in the Ile-de-France is instinct with delicacy, lightness and exquisite art; and to the seeing eye the soft paste of the porcelain of Sèvres, like the tender rose and white flesh of a goddess, the dainty, ethereal mesh of the laces of the Valois and the blonde laces of Chantilly, are a revelation of the innate grace, delicate adornment and costly decoration of this province.

The Ile-de-France is the royal fief *par excellence*, quite as much as Touraine and the Orleanais, as much so or even more than Anjou. We have only to follow the roads we have mentioned, for twenty centuries of history to rise up among these stones, which have seen so many things, and arouse the memory and speak to the imagination like so many appeals from a remote past. Like the Celtic or Armorican cantons, those nearer Paris still contain a number of megalithic monuments, the mutilated survivals of primitive religions. Of all these monuments, the most famous and the best preserved is the *Pierre turquaise*, a fine covered way in the Forest of Carnelles. But a menhir like the *Cuisse de Gargantua* (Gargantua's thigh), near Nanteuil-le-Haudoin, the *Pierre Hardroue*, at Saint-Léger-en-Yveline, the monoliths at Pierrefitte or Maintenon, the dolmen known as the *Trou aux Anglais* at Epone, the

The Isle Saint-Denis. After a painting by Sisley.

dolmen at Argenteuil, bear witness to the long duration of old and venerable faiths.

Forest of Carnelles. Pierre Turquaise.

Roman rule, which was marked by the building of the amphitheatre *(Arènes)* and Baths of Lutetia in the days of Julian, still leaves its trace in the broken-down tiers of seats of other amphitheatres

outside the city, in particular at Champlieu in the Forest of Compiègne, where the *Iphigénie* of Jean Moréas was acted, and lastly at Senlis. The age of feudalism has left abundant traces in the Ile-de-France. In the first place, a number of towns and villages, like Chartres or Provins, still have bridges, gates, or fortifications of the period : for instance, Moret, Château-Landon, Dourdan, Saint-Jean-aux-Bois. Next there are the strongholds with solid walls built between the 12th and 15th centuries, of which Coucy, La Ferté-Milon, Vez and above all Pierrefonds make up the tale. Near Paris rises the lofty donjon of Vincennes, dating from the same period; and finally there are scattered through the whole Ile-de-France the still mighty remains of the warlike, turbulent middle ages : the tower of Montlhéry, the Epaule of Gallardon; or the

Ville d'Avray. Corot's Lake.

solid, massive donjons of Houdan, Maurepas, Bonnières (Le Mesnil-Regnard), La Roche-Guyon and Montepilloy. Other witnesses to this warlike age are to be seen commanding the valleys of the Juine and the Yvette : the Tour Guinette overlooking Etampes, the castle of La Madeleine overlooking Chevreuse. Thus every century has left its mark on the Ile-de-France. And if an afterglow of the Renaissance still lingers on the remains of Anet, at Fontainebleau or Ecouen, we may also admire the grand conceptions and delicate achievement of the 17th and 18th centuries at Chantilly, Versailles, Vaux-le-Vicomte, Trianon, Betz, Méréville, Courances, Champs, Raray, Ognon and Dampierre, besides any number of dwelling houses in which the genius of Mansart, Perrault, Le Vau, and Gabriel, and the art of Le Nostre and his disciples, seem to have vied with each other in perfection, nobility and harmonious balance.

We can also find similar traces of departed ages, the same wealth of architecture, sometimes Romanesque, sometimes Gothic, sometimes rich with all the florid bloom of the Renaissance, in the fine Hôtels-de-ville of Compiègne, Dreux, Etampes, even at Clermont in the department of Oise; but their survivals are most apparent, and their character most clearly to be seen, in the venerable churches or chapels of the Vexin, the Valois, the Hurepoix, which all lead up to the magnificent great cathedrals which dominate the Ile-de-France or soar heavenwards on the furthest borders of its territory : Notre-Dame de Paris, the Sainte-Chapelle, Notre-Dame at Chartres, Notre-Dame at Senlis and at Beauvais, and lastly the cathedral of Noyon, so gravely damaged by the war, which the English writer Stevenson, who saw it in all its glory, was wont to compare to a giant ship rising above the woods and fields on the borders of the plains of Picardy. The religion of the past, with all its mysticism and fervour, is still to be seen rising from the depths of past ages, living though wounded, with its naked arcades, beneath the shattered vaulting and broken columns of many a French abbey which might rival the great abbeys of Normandy : Saint-Wandrille and Jumièges, Maubuisson, Royaumont, Cernay, Port-Royal all have some claim to be numbered among the survivals. Then there are the abbeys of Montcel at Pont-Sainte-Maxence, of La Victoire not far from Senlis, of Le Lys near Dammarie, of Le Val in the neighbourhood of L'Isle-Adam, of Jouarre in the valley of the Petit Morin; and lastly,

the most venerable of all, the Abbey of Longpont, a relic of the pious age of the crusades, of contemplation and prayer, rising on the outskirts of the Forest of Villers-Cotterets, on the banks of the Savières.

Thus, considered as a whole, the Ile-de-France is not only a flower-garden, a " delectable garden ", to quote Bernard Palissy, who admired its rustic beauties; it is also a garden of stones, all of them with their own peculiar beauty and history. In the course of the ages the sacred stones of these buildings have inspired ardent outpourings of prayer and devotion to God and country. From the introduction of Christianity to the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th century, great throngs of pilgrims have never ceased journeying, staff in hand, from Paris to the holy, miraculous sanctuaries which form a sacred girdle round the capital : first to Notre-Dame-des-Vertus at Aubervilliers, and Saint-Denis-en-France, where the kings of France lay for centuries, and Saint-Maclou at Pontoise; next to Sainte-Geneviève-des-Bois and Longpont near Montlhéry; and lastly to Saint-Sulpice-de-Favières, the fine basilica built in the middle of the Hurepoix, between Arpajon and Dourdan.

But it was above all to Nanterre that the pilgrims repaired, Nanterre, where was born in the 5th century the humble peasant-girl, the poor shepherdess, who was to become the patron saint of Paris, Geneviève, whose miraculous memory, handed down through the ages, inspired one of the most fervent of French poets, Charles Péguy, the soldier-hero of the Marne, with the simply, sweetly-woven verse of his *Tapisserie*.

Before starting out upon the long journey which he made on foot from Paris to Chartres, through Dourdan, Palaiseau, Sainte-Mesme and Auneau, Charles Péguy, the last pilgrim of the Ile-de-France, once again went and prayed in that sanctuary where the name of Geneviève still holds its sway, mingled with the incense of prayer and the sound of the bells. The bells! We may here recall their appeal and repeat their hymn. In the subtle air, beneath the pure, clear sky of the Ile-de-France, they vibrate with a peculiar thrill, with a tone at once moving, tender and soothing. Contemplation, meditation, the inner life of the soul, hope and forgiveness; such is the message of the bells, from the great, deep-toned *Marie* of Notre-Dame, to the humble

church bells of Arbonne, Chailly or Barbizon which gave Millet the subject of his *Angelus*. But let us not forget that these bells have sounded the tocsin, the alarm; they have called to work, to battle and to prayer; they have calmed the surging passions of many a heart, and infused peace into many a conscience. I remember the church bell of Rueil, which Bonaparte could never hear without a thrill as he walked in the gardens of La Malmaison. " He would stop, " writes Bourrienne, who was then following his every movement. " He would stop, lest the sound of our footsteps might make him lose a single echo of the sound which charmed him. ' That reminds me ', he would say to his companion, ' of the early years which I passed at Brienne. I was happy then ! ' Then the bell would cease and he would resume the thread of his tremendous dreams, soaring into the future, placing a crown on his head and dethroning kings. "

Thus in the Ile-de-France a whole world of history rises up at every step from the age-old ground, from the venerable stones, the charming gardens, the singing waters and springs, and the deep voice of the bells.

After Corot. Souvenir de Mortefontaine.

Saint-Cloud.

CHAPTER II

—

The Immediate Surroundings of Paris

THE greatest dramatic poet of the Ile-de-France, Jean Racine, who was also one of those who prized it most, wrote from Uzès to M. Vitart during his youth : " When I speak of Paris, I include the beautiful surrounding region; for they (the Muses) leave the city from time to time to take the country air ". Thus in that most civilized of centuries, when conversations full of learned affectation were the supreme good and pleasure in the eyes of lovely Frenchwomen, there were already high-bred, fine and sensitive spirits who loved to go outside the city in search of a little repose, of country joys and healthy air.

It should be observed that at that time the little places near Paris, the market towns, or even large villages, such as Asnières, Colombes,

Meudon. After the engraving by Moreau the Elder.

Bois-Colombes, La Garenne, Les Lilas, Le Pré Saint-Gervais, with their names redolent of thyme and heather, were still villages of a rural character, surrounded by woods, and fit for hunting expeditions or parties of pleasure. Up to the end of the 18th century it was this rustic and genuinely countrified character of what we nowadays prosaically call the inner suburbs that charmed our forefathers. It was not necessary to go far then before coming to the country. Once outside the gates of the city one found oneself in the real country. Read *Manon Lescaut*, and you will see that in the eyes of the Abbé Prévost hamlets like Passy or Chaillot were out of the way and remote retreats. When Caylus, in his *Contes et facéties*, shows us a sempstress of the period, Mam'zelle Godiche, going for a country excursion with her lover, he also represents her as going to Chaillot. Madame Vigée Lebrun, the great French society portrait painter of the age of Louis XVI, also decribes in her *Souvenirs* the village of Chaillot, which in our day has become one of the most fashionable parts of Paris, as being such a rural spot that the young

shop-assistants " would come there every Sunday to amuse themselves by taking a shot at the birds ". She herself — or rather her father-in-law — possessed a little cottage garden there, of such minute proportions that it did not contain a single tree — at most an arbour with runner-beans and nasturtiums trained over it.

Such is the description given by the writer of these charming memoirs; and it gives a good picture of the state of Paris and the surrounding district between 1760 and 1780. To those living at that time even the toll-gates of Sèvres or the Gobelins were remote spots. As for Auteuil and Meudon, they were at the ends of the earth, and the boats which called there took a long time reaching these charming suburbs; so much so that when Gabriel de Saint-Aubin, that delightful organiser of open-air entertainments and court pageantry, had to go and make the drawings for his *Bal d'Auteuil*, or Joseph Vernet started out for Meudon with his son Carle to find some " agreeable prospect to paint ", they looked upon it as quite a journey. We can see too in

The château of Asnières.

The Seine at Sèvres.

the *Rêveries d'un promeneur solitaire* what a serious affair a man like Jean-Jacques Rousseau considered a botanical expedition to the valley of the Bièvre, beyond Gentilly. And when Madame Lebrun, whom we have already seen settled at Chaillot, chanced to go to Colombes to visit the estate of Moulin Joli, lost among verdure, where Watelet was living with his mistress Marguerite Lecomte, it was quite an event. Sometimes Madame Lebrun went there alone, sometimes with Hubert-Robert. "This spot," she

Rodin's Tomb.

writes, " is one of those which one never forgets. So lovely, so varied, picturesque, Elysian, wild — in short, enchanting ". There were trees on

Sèvres. The Museum of Ceramics.

every side, most of them of gigantic proportions, " enormous poplars and great weeping willows ", a bridge of boats leading to the island, upon which Watelet had built his retreat on the banks of the Seine; and in addition to all this, a " fragrant air ", a " wonderful prospect ", absolute repose, in short all that is most enchanting and pleasant.

A Corner in the Museum.

The Marne at Champigny.

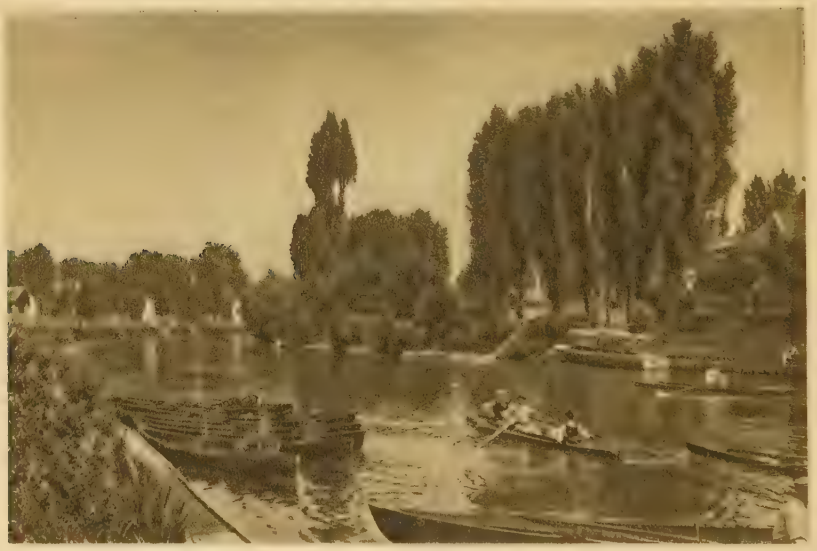
When we read such lines as these, written in a spot whence all poetry and charm have long since fled, we feel as if we were dreaming. And yet we cannot but remember all the pleasant residences near at hand: the châteaux of Bécon or Courbevoie, of Saint-Ouen or Colombes. It should not be forgotten that some of

The Marne near Nogent.

the finest noblemen's estates in the 18th century were situated quite near Paris, in places now devoid of a single green leaf, and entirely given over to industry : thus Saint-Ouen belonged to Madame de Pompadour, Gennevilliers to the Comte de Vaudreuil, Le Raincy and Bagnolet to the Duke of Orleans, Romainville to the Maréchal de Ségur, and Choisy again, beyond the Port-à-l'Anglais, to Madame de Pompadour. These elegant abodes, to which grandeur was often added by the masterpieces of art which they contained or the gardens by which they were surrounded, prove how much the immediate approaches to the city were sought after for their verdure. And, besides great country houses like Bercy, with its wealth of pictures and *objets d'art*, or Conflans, the country residence of the Archbishops of Paris, between Bercy and Charenton, we have yet to mention the dainty little country houses known as *papillons*, *vide-bouteilles*, *folies* or

Raincy. The Church.

maisons des vignes dotted about here and there, especially on the banks of the Seine between Saint-Cloud and Marly, from Rueil to Boulogne.



The Marne. Joinville.

At that period, whose charming caprices almost carry us back to the days of fairy tales, the hill sides round Argenteuil and Suresnes were still covered with cool vineyards, the light wine of Mareil, known as *piqueton*, was appreciated by wine-lovers, and from the heights of Montmartre to those of Sannois there were real mills which ground real flour. And finally there were genuine popular festivities, famous fairs like that of Bezons, painted by Octavien, to which thronged not only shopmen and sempstresses, but lovely ladies and brilliant lords, mingled in the common pursuit of pleasure. During this century and the next such a spot, covered with woods and surrounded by hills, where inviting cabarets, little leafy arbours and pretty views were to be found at every step along the river-bank, was a paradise for art students and their models, poets and their grisettes.

The Marne. Joinville.

The famous " Robinson ", so dear to the youth of the capital nowadays, with its donkey-rides towards Aulnay, and its dinners served in tree-tops, seems very stiff and artificial compared with the picnics and gay pranks in which the light-hearted heroes of Murget and Musset

After Manet. Le déjeuner sur l'herbe.

still indulged in the days of the Romantic period. But how remote it all is now ! And when Balzac describes the ball at Sceaux, or when Jules Vallès gives an account in *Le Bachelier* of the duel at Robinson (now rather vulgarised), we cannot recover from our amazement at so much fresh ingenuousness, enthusiasm and credulity. We need only mention for the sake of completeness the poetic little excursions to Montmorency, the walks or boating parties along the Marne. In our day the same diversions and pleasures are to be found for those who love boating on this slow-flowing river near Chennevières, between Champigny,

Bagatelle.

Joinville and Nogent; but in those youthful days it was the most famous of poets, Victor Hugo, the author of the *Chansons des rues et des bois*, who approached the Marne in the direction of Creteil, at a time of day when it is "sparkling with light", and, his heart filled with Virgilian imagery, admired "a maiden washing in the Marne her garments radiant with light".

The joys of the waterside, the cool pleasures of summer, have

Outside Bagatelle.

always been sought after by Parisians throughout the ages. For years the galliots of the Pont Neuf used to row pleasure-seekers out to Auteuil or the Point du Jour. Next came the steam-boats; and nowadays the joys of gliding over the water and wielding the oar lend animation, as in past days, to the neighbourhood of the Ile de la Chaussée, at the spot known as La Grenouillère, between Chatou, Bougival and Croissy. It was here, among the willows, beneath the great poplars which fringe the banks of this large island, in view of the wooded hill-sides which rise in the direction of Marly and Louveciennes, that Courbet painted one of his chief works, the *Demoiselles des bords de la Seine.*

A little later, it was on the islands of Puteaux and La Grande Jatte, or on the bridges of Argenteuil and Asnières that Monet and Sisley in turn delighted to perpetuate the changing aspects of the river in their misty or sun-bathed canvasses. Who would believe, to look at these squalid river banks to-day, these blighted shores, this smoky landscape all scattered with rubbish and over-run with works and factories, that

Bagatelle. The Rose Garden.

Bagatelle. A Façade.

about 1860 there were splendid trees growing opposite the Ile de Saint-Ouen, with rich, dense foliage, and that on this island Edouard Manet conceived and painted his *Déjeuner sur l'herbe,* and aimed at recalling the movements and attitudes of Giorgione's ladies under the form

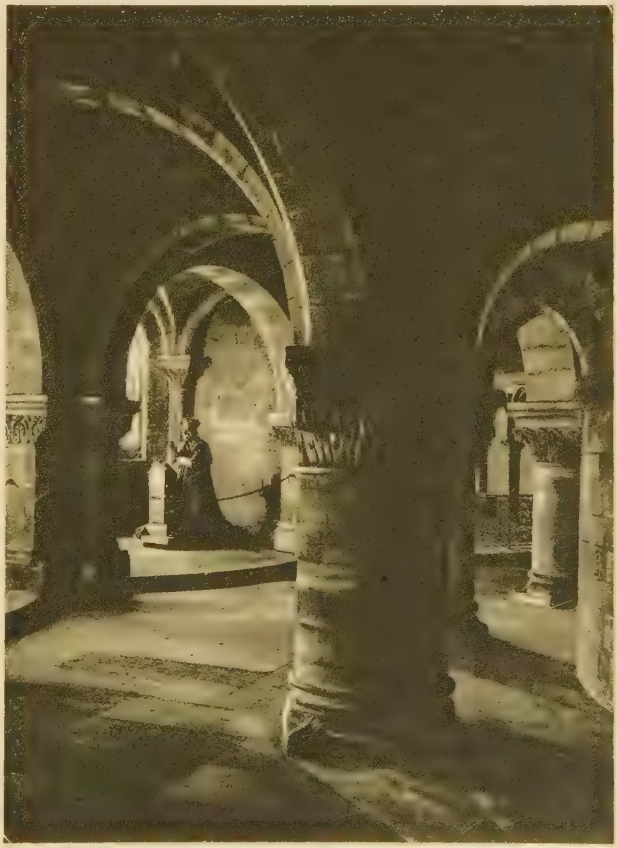
The Church of Saint Denis.

of these modern nymphs ? Must we record that time, fire, war, revolution, all these devastating scourges, which have wiped out all trace of the palaces of Meudon, Marly, Saint-Cloud, the châteaux of Issy and Bellevue, have extended their ravages to the gardens and parks, and even the national forests which adorn these inner suburbs ?

To say so would be to forget Chaville, Clamart, the Forest of Meudon, the woods of Verrières (between Verrières-le-Buisson and Bièvres), or of Vincennes, and finally, the rose-gardens of l'Hay or Bagatelle, with their carnations, verbena and roses; nor should we omit the lovely Bois de Boulogne, the joy and delight of Parisians, with its winding avenues, its cascade and lakes. It was only after many transformations, much shrinkage, and the felling of many of its trees that the ancient

Forest of Rouveray which occupied this spot, or at least the remains of it, became the elegant resort known as the Bois. Historians may tell us how the name of the mediaeval poet Arnaud Catelan, assassinated by ruffians in the forest, came to be attached to the Pré-Catelan, or where the former château of Madrid got its name.

Madrid was actually a pretty little château of three storeys, forming an oblong, in which there were said to be as many windows as there were days in the year. Its name was given it in memory of Francis I's captivity in Spain; but alas! nothing remains of this charming gem of Renaissance architecture. On the other hand, what was once the *Folie d'Artois*, delightful Bagatelle, situated near Saint-James, the windmill of Longchamp and the Jardin d'Acclimatation, has survived the passage of time. It may even be said that the appearance of the building has hardly changed since it was painted by



The Crypt.

Saint-Denis. Tomb of Louis XII and Anne of Brittany.

Trianon, Brimborion or Louveciennes, the French monarchy has left many a memory. But they are memories of its decline; and if we desire to trace it back to the cradle of the dynasty, the origin of the race, we must cross Paris, enter the northern suburbs, and boldly make our way into that hive of industry, the busy, humming city of Saint-Denis, which once had a famous abbey, and is still commanded by the Basilica, the tomb of the kings, and was for long known as Saint-Denis-en-France.

Saint-Denis, near the Parisis,

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the elder Moreau in the 18th century. It remains the same slight structure, a sort of Castle of the Sleeping Beauty, but a Sleeping Beauty rather in the Pompadour style.

The learned affectations of Madame de Mauconseil, the amatory adventures of Mesdemoiselles Duthé or de Charolais, those beauties of a frivolous age, still haunt the panelled rooms, the discreet white walls of this structure to which Oudry and Robert lent the magic of their art. Here, as at

Saint-Denis. Tomb of Henri II and Catherine de' Medici.

Saint-Denis. The Nave.

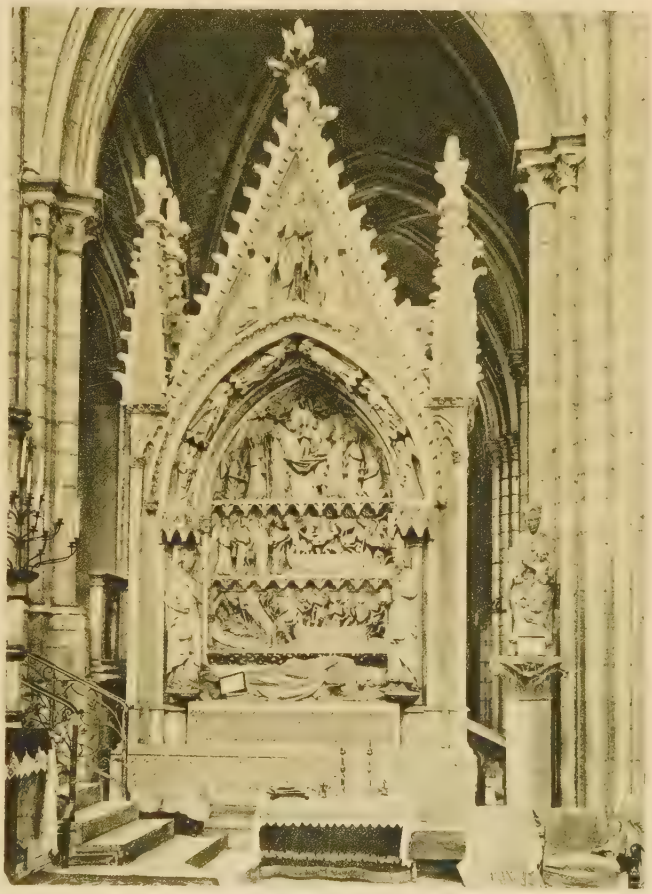
Effigy of Du Guesclin.

and situated by geographers in the region known as *France*, was a little town on the island of the same name. " It lies ", they say, " to the north of Paris, going in the direction of Senlis; but there are also Montmorency, Ecouen and Gonesse ". If we remember that Hugues the Great, the father of Hugues Capet, was Count of Paris, Duke of France and Abbot of Saint-Denis, we shall understand how these three titles, which were soon to be fused in that of king, perfectly summed up and grouped, as it were, the origins, prerogatives and arms of one and the same region upon a single head and in a single hand. As Count of Paris, Hugues the Great conferred his full prestige upon the capital, but as Duke of France, the little region of *France* stretching from the Multien (the region of Meaux) to the Parisis, he made use of a name destined to become glorious, that of king of one of the fairest kingdoms of the earth; and lastly, as Abbot of Saint-Denis, he added eccle-

Where lies the heart of Francis I.

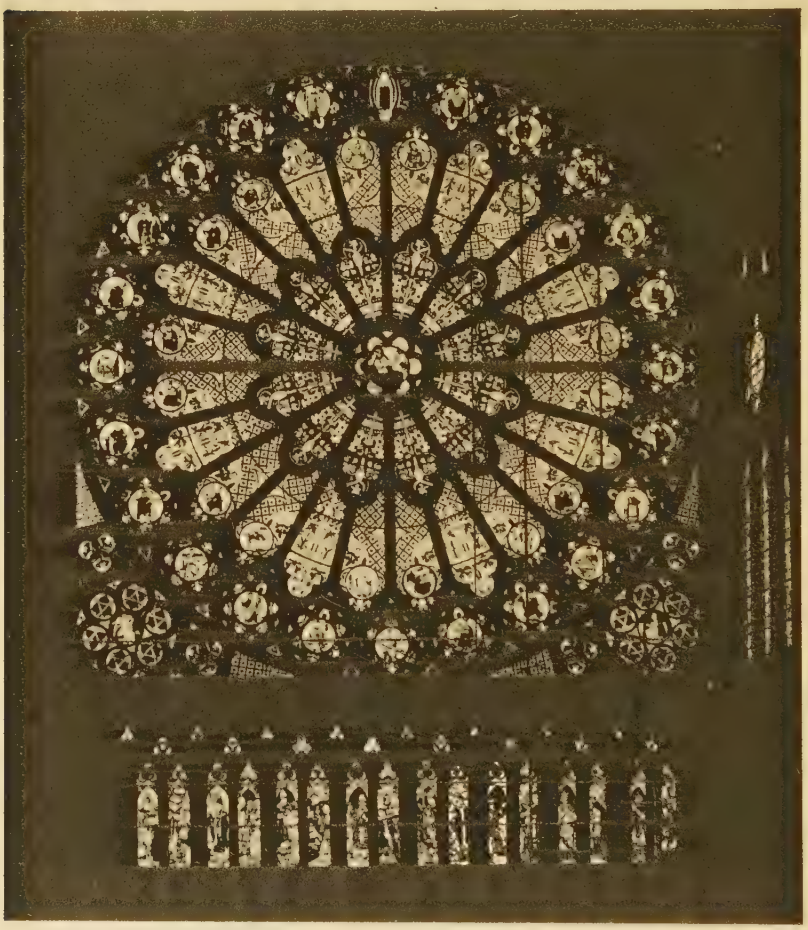
siastical functions to his ducal coronet and the armorial bearings of a count.

From the outset there was no power comparable to his. Later on, it is true, the kings went to Reims to be crowned; but before being crowned, they had to exist. Saint-Denis represents both the starting point and the goal; it is at once the cradle of the Capetian dynasty and the sepulchre in which it was laid to rest. And this is why Michelet could say, using a brilliant figure of speech which might be adopted as a justification and illustration of this book : " As for this centre of the centre, Paris, Ile-de-France, there is only one way to make them under-



Saint-Denis. The Tomb of Dagobert.

stood, namely, to relate the history of the monarchy ". We shall soon see the splendours of this monarchy : we shall visit Anet and Fontaine-



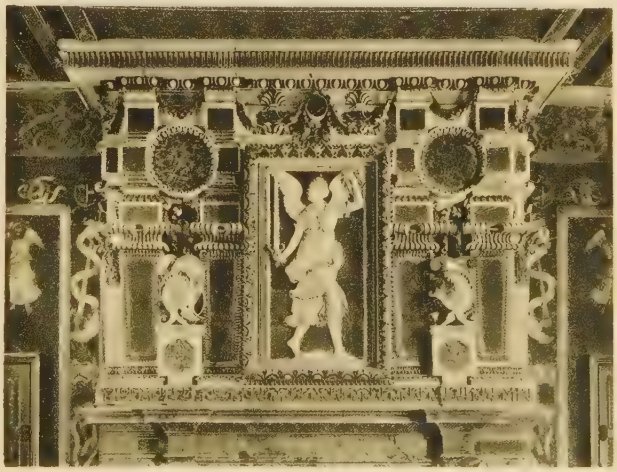
Saint-Denis. One of the Rose Windows.

bleau, Versailles and Compiègne; but let us first pause before these sacred stones; upon which all the rest are based. It is impossible to

Ecouen.

grasp the other monuments, or understand anything to do with the other abbeys, châteaux, religious, military or civil buidings of the Ile-de-France, unless we have first come here and touched the foundations and masonry with our very hands.

In the Basilica of Saint-Denis it may be said that the foundations and masonry



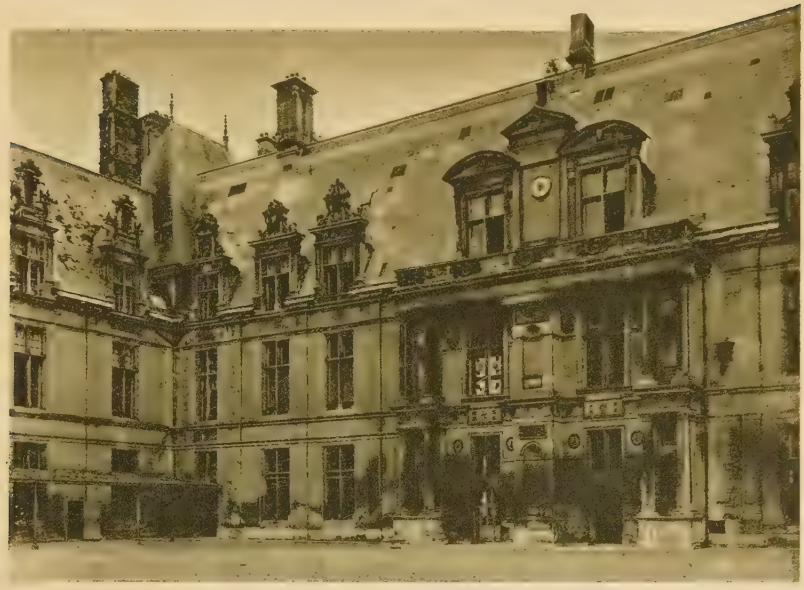
Ecouen. A chimney breast in the Château.

are to be found in the crypt, which, according to MM. Paul Vitry and Gaston Brière, the historians of the old abbey church, corresponds to " the ancient, subterranean chapel of the Virgin, built in 832 by Abbot Hilduin, standing next a great rounded apse on the west, of which we can still see the traces outside, and which was no more nor

The Château of Ecouen.

less than the *martyrium* of the Carolingian church containing the remains of Saint-Denis ". Never was the name *martyrium* better deserved. Among the royal tombs contained in this primitive crypt, we may in fact draw attention to those " containing the remains of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette, brought from the cemetery of the Madeleine ".

The first idea of founding the Abbey of Saint-Denis is said to go back to King Dagobert, but there is every reason to ascribe the original conception of this monument destined to contain the tombs of the kings to the wise Suger. Add to these the tombs erected a little before or during the 16th century, especially those of Louis and Valentine of Orleans, Louis XII and Anne of Brittany, a masterpiece of the Juste



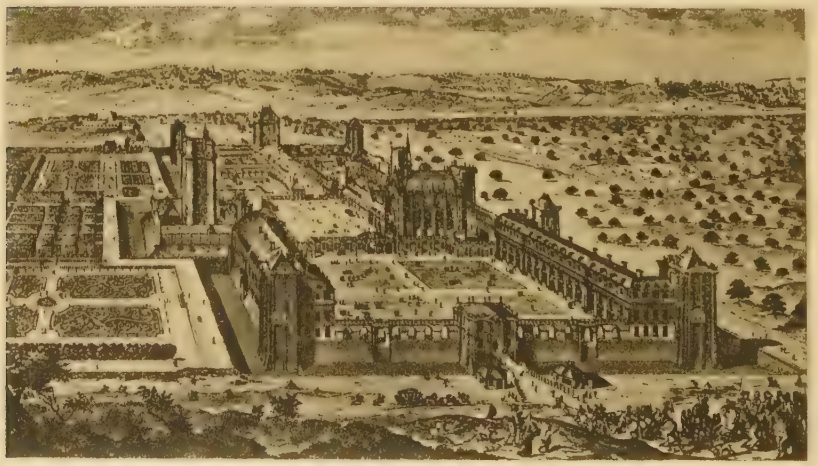
The Inner Courtyard of the Château.

brothers, that of Francis I and Claude of France, the work of Philibert Delorme and the sculptor Bontemps, and lastly, the magnificent mausoleum erected to the memory of Henri II and Catherine de' Medici, the chief artists engaged upon which were Primaticcio and Germain Pilon; all of which bear witness to the decorative beauty, the architectural grandeur and the perfection of statuary art by which the art and genius of the Renaissance may be recognised.

The Château d'Ecouen.
Lock-plate of one of the State Apartments.

To this epoch, of which the chief characteristic was its floridness, belongs the château of Ecouen, a little to the north-east of Saint-Denis, built for the Constable de Montmorency by the famous Jean Bullant, one of the architects of Chenonceaux and the Tuileries. The proportions of the buildings, the delicacy of the turrets, the elegant lightness of the roofs, the finely-proportioned lace-like carving and adornment of the windows, and lastly, the detail of the medallions, ascribed — especially those in the courtyard *(cour d'honneur)* — to Jean Goujon, bear witness to the fact that the Ile-de-France has nothing to envy the regions of Blois or Touraine as regards this type of building. Here, just to the north of the territory of the little ancient region of France, is to be found, not far from Paris, one of the most consummate edifices of the northern regions, equalling Blois or Chambord.

It was in this region, one of the most fertile in the realm, that the finest and best wheat used to be grown. The Paris corn-market drew its supplies of wheat from Gonesse in France and Dammartin in the Goële just as much as from the Beauce. " Gonesse, where they make the best bread in France, " runs an inscription discovered by M. L. Gallois on a map, in which this pretty little town is shown raising its graceful thirteenth-century church spire on the banks of the Crould. It is, more-



Vincennes. The Château. From an engraving by Brissart in 1666.

Job. From the Miniature at Chantilly after Jean Fouquet.

over, a charming region famous not only for its white bread but for its wit. Did not Francis I, in laughing at Charles V and his vaunted prerogatives and imperial titles, say that he himself was content " to be lord of Vanves and Gonesse ? "

Between Gonesse (near Saint-Denis) and Vanves, not far from Clamart, we have to describe almost a semicircle round Paris as the crow flies. First, to the west of Bondy, with the remains of its forest, lie the three ancient regions of Livry, Ville-Parisis and Montfermeil. Was it not from Livry that Madame de Sévigné wrote some of her witty letters — for instance, the following one, dated May 30, 1672 : " The beauty of Livry surpasses everything you can have seen; the trees are finer and greener; everything is full of fragrant honeysuckle... " But it was at Montfermeil that Paul de Kock met his milkmaid, and it is no small matter to recall the fact that Mme de Berny lived at Villeparisis and was visited there by Balzac. Victor Hugo also knew Montfermeil, for he mentions it in *Les Misérables* (the episode of Colette and the Thénardiers); we shall also find him a little further on at the little town of Chelles with its abbey :

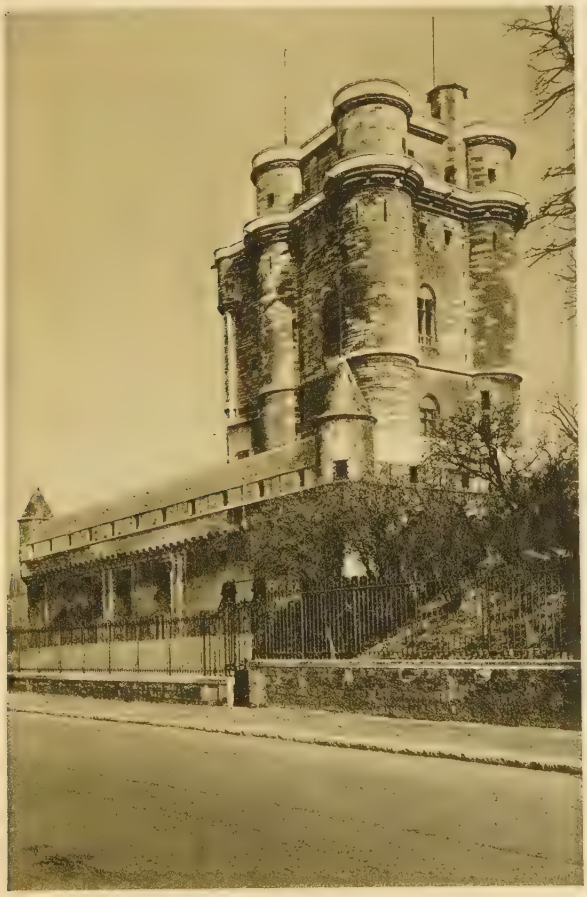
" J'aime Chelles et ses cressonnières
Et le doux tic-tac des moulins... "

(I love Chelles and its watercress beds
and the gentle click-clack of its mills).

At Chelles we have already reached the Marne. And we shall be led by the sound of the mill-wheels and the cool air of the watercress beds all along its banks, at Nogent, which Watteau has sketched and painted, and at Champigny, where French blood has been shed. To the east and west of that part of the river's course which concerns us, should be noted two châteaux belonging to different centuries, but of equal fame : first, between Torcy and Noisy-le-Grand, to the south of Chelles, the chateau of Champs, once owned by Madame de Pompadour, and whose splendid gardens in the French style are one of the floral wonders of the Ile-de-France; and second, the feudal and military castle of Vincennes.

One of Jehan Fouquet's most ornate and finished miniatures,

preserved in the Condé Museum at Chantilly, shows in the background of one of its principal scenes (Job on his dunghill) a picture of this fine, powerful donjon as it was in the 15th century, and as it still is. It would be impossible to sketch have in a few lines the chronicle of this donjon or of the whole castle, the chapel with its windows in the flamboyant style, the king's pavilion and the queen's pavilion; or to give a brief list of the royal personages, the important prisoners or famous captives — from Condé to Mirabeau and Diderot — who have spent longer or shorter periods there. Moreover, one great dramatic event has dominated the whole history of the fortress since the time of the Consulate; the arrest, trial and execution in the very moat of the Castle, by order of the First Consul, of Louis-Antoine-Henri of Bourbon-Condé, Duke of Enghien.



Vincennes. The Tower.

This bloody episode is commemorated by a tomb erected to the memory of the prince, which can still be seen in an annexe of the chapel, as well as by a

Vincennes. The Moat and the Tower.

column on the spot where the prisoner fell beneath the bullets of the firing-party. As to the general aspect of the castle and its warlike character, these have hardly changed since the day when Alfred de Vigny gave a description of them in his *Veillée de Vincennes*, which is as poetical as it is accurate. Napoleon appears again far to the south of Vincennes, as it were where the Orge and the Seine meet, not far from Juvisy, at the postmaster's house in the hamlet of Fromenteau, known as the *Cour de France*.

It was here that on March 30, 1814 the Emperor heard of the capitulation of Paris, upon which nothing was left to him but to retrace his steps, reach Corbeil and from thence Fontainebleau, where he signed his act of abdication. Such is the power of evoking the past possessed by these stones, by the humblest as well as the most splendid monuments of the Ile-de-France: the past asserts itself on every road, at every step, in every house. The past is everywhere, with its legends. So true

Vincennes. In the Woods.

is this, that from the market town of Lieusaint in the Forest of Sénart, where the attack on the Lyons mail took place, to Longjumeau, where the bells of the famous postillion rang out so gaily as he passed through the village of Viry, where Charles Perrault, the Perrault of the fairy tales, was once the good-natured host of the château, this fertile, venerable, yet living land is rich in every sort of memory; it gains in grandeur and animation, and thrills at the call of a past so rich in events, memories and episodes.

Without going very far afield, to what confidences we might listen under the arbours of Brunoy, where the Count of Provence, afterwards Louis XVIII, used to stay, or at Gros-Bois, visited by Barras, or lastly, in the avenues at Savigny, on the banks of the Orge, where Chateaubriand would often walk with Madame de Beaumont on his arm. But if stones could speak, nothing could compare with the enchantments of the Court of Sceaux. Nobody who now finds his way to this quiet town, adorned by a peaceful old-world garden, where the Félibres have clustered round the ancient church, turning it into a sort of Provençal Pantheon, could imagine what splendid fêtes were given in the great park near by in the time of

Vincennes. The Sainte Chapelle.

the Duchesse du Maine. Those were the days of the " great nights " *(Grandes nuits)*, with balls, illuminations, fireworks, theatricals, the ritual of the order of the *Mouche à miel* (honeybee), the musical entertainments with Malezieu, the Abbé Genest and La Fare, in fact all the intimates of a society of which the Revolution and the housebreakers have left scarcely a trace. For it is by their agency that the houses have passed away which once formed a crown of fair stonework all round Paris, a turreted diadem, designed by architects of magical genius.

What is left of Choisy, Sceaux, Meudon and Bellevue, those fairy palaces once so brilliant and famous? Little but a broken slab or so, a few walls here and there, half buried beneath the grass. As for Saint-Cloud, which was burnt in 1870, nothing is left but the park — splendid though it be — the terraces and flights of steps. But here, as at Marly, nature has reasserted her rights, reclaimed the soil, overthrown and scored both stone and marble.

But if we are to return towards Saint-Denis-en-France, to complete our itinerary, thus enclosing Paris in one great loop, we must find our way to Argenteuil. In this region all the nymphs are market gardeners, from Cormeilles to the borders of the Parisis, beyond La Frette and Herblay, overlooking the Seine; but to the north and east, towards Saint-Gratien and Enghien, on the shores of the lake and in the forests where so many great shades have wandered, from the Maréchal de Catinat to the Princesse Mathilde, they are of noble blood. Once more, as we reach Epinay, Montmorency, Eaubonne, the whole of that " enchanted land ", where Rousseau was master, the nymphs assume their patches and paniers, and appear in the piquant guise of portraits by Liotard, or beauties of Boucher and Vanloo. Some of these French nymphs, like M^me^ Epinay, were intellectual; others, like M^me^ de Houdetot were spirited, dashing figures, rather passionate and great coquettes. Poor Jean-Jacques, the " bear " of these not very savage regions, more than once made the journey up hill and down dale from one of them to the others, and with what enchanting tones and colours has he described the landscape, the châteaux and the forest in his *Confessions*.

Whether at Mont-Louis or the Ermitage, or staying with the Maréchal de Luxembourg, he was always the " fantastic shepherd ", more or less in love, always suffering, a persecuted, gloomy figure, whose

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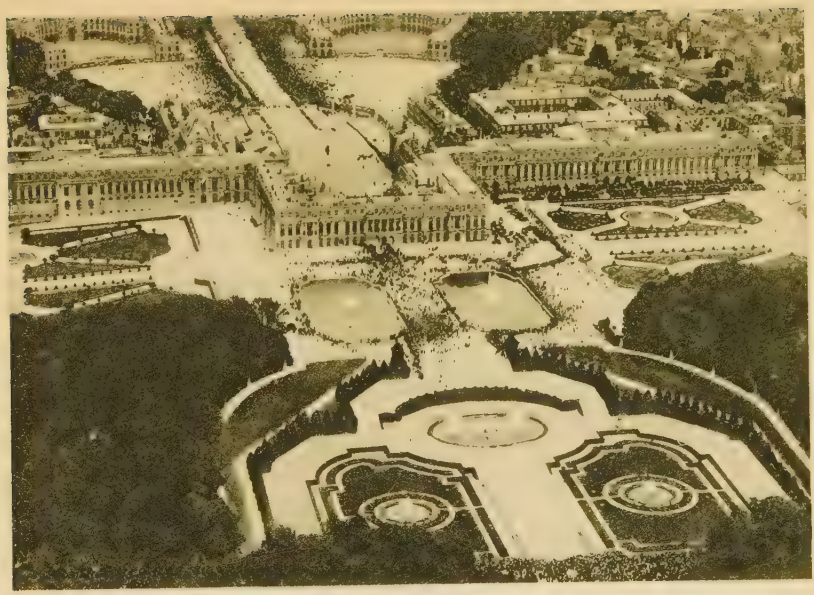
sensitive and pungent genius none the less moved the world and restored the colour to nature. With his *Confessions* in our hand we may still make our way through this charming country, among the chestnut and cherry trees, along the path from the Ermitage to Eaubonne, less than three miles away, following in his footsteps as we look for the grove, the bank of turf, and the acacia loaded with flowers beneath which his tears flowed as he poured out his passion at the feet of M^me^ d'Houdetot.

Bougival.



Versailles. Bird's-eye view.

CHAPTER III

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Versailles and the Trianons

The Château of Versailles may be approached from more than one direction. In the first place, we may approach it by the " Hundred Steps " next the Orangery, leading to the Parterre du Midi; from here it looks like one of those splendid Roman palaces which Piranesi has interpreted like so many poems in stone. Or if we prefer, we may give ourselves the fairylike vision of discovering it by starting from the Trianon, from the pool known as the Fer-à-Cheval, and along the Grand Canal; in which case we are led to it through an almost Venetian setting, where nothing is missing but the gondolas — and in the time of Louis XIV even they were here. There is even to be found here still, next the Allée des Matelots, a sort of hamlet composed of little old-

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Versailles. The Marble Court.

world structures in which lived real Venetians, sent from the city of the doges to navigate the great king's flotilla. Lastly — and this is the most usual approach — we may come from the direction of the station, find the Place d'Armes, and, after taking a glance at the greater and lesser royal stables, make our way into the Château by the Cour d'honneur and the Cour de marbre.

This last approach has the advantage of at once bringing the visitor face to face with the oldest part of the Château, namely, the façade designed by the architect Le Vau in a style already distinct from that of the previous reign. This building, which later formed the far side of the Cour de marbre, may be called Louis XIV's first Versailles, built by the king for his own use, and substituted, to quote the Duc de Saint-Simon, for the " little castle of cards " of the time of Louis XIII. This first Versailles has the merit of symbolising by its sobriety and ornate delicacy the youthful loves of the monarch. This was the château visited by M^lle^ de la Vallière, and it was here that Molière staged for her *L'Im-*

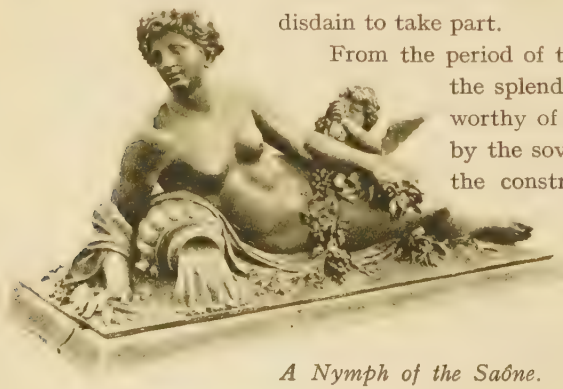
promptu, *Don Garcie* and *La Princesse d'Elide*, with their gallant allusions introduced for her benefit.

It was on the site of this old Versailles, which he had somewhat outgrown, that, as Louis XIV's glory increased with his success in arms, he formed the plan of building a larger château more in keeping with his splendour and power. To quote M^lle^ de Scudery, the first Versailles was by this time only " the little house of the greatest king on earth ". And now, first François d'Orbais, a pupil of Le Vau, and later François Mansart, designed round the nucleus of this "little house " a palace towards the completion of which the finest artists in every sphere were to contribute. Painters like Le Brun and Franz van der Meulen; the sculptor Coysevox, the brothers Marsy,

Versailles. The Chapel.

Versailles. North Façade.

the finest tapestry weavers of the Gobelins, were all to collaborate in the execution of this great work. It formed such a perfectly-ordered whole that music and the theatre were admitted on an equal footing, and Lully, Superintendent of the Music of the Chamber, came and arranged concerts in the Salon de Mars, one of the most spacious of the Grands Appartements, and, either by himself or with Quinault, organised the ballets in which Louis XIV himself did not disdain to take part.



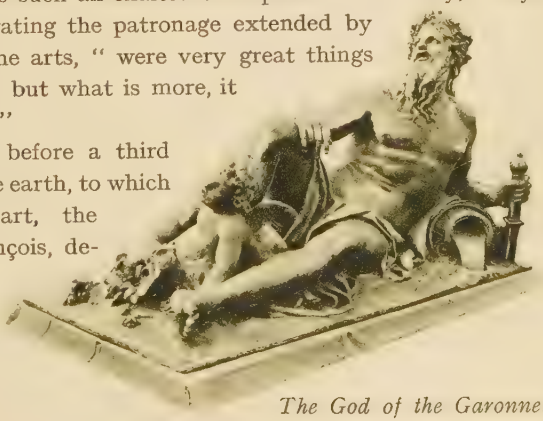
A Nymph of the Saône.

From the period of this second Versailles, the splendour of which is fully worthy of the design conceived by the sovereign himself, dates the construction, first of the King's Apartments, looking towards the Bassin de Neptune, and then of the

Versailles. South Façade.

Queen's Apartments, overlooking the parterre of the Orangery and looking towards the Pièce d'eau des Suisses. Nothing could be more stately and imposing than these lofty rooms, these spacious saloons, these chambers full of great windows through which streams a flood of light; nor could anything be more suited to that royal state of which Louis XIV had always such an exalted conception. " Not only, " says Voltaire in commemorating the patronage extended by the sovereign to all the arts, " were very great things done during his reign; but what is more, it was he that did them. "

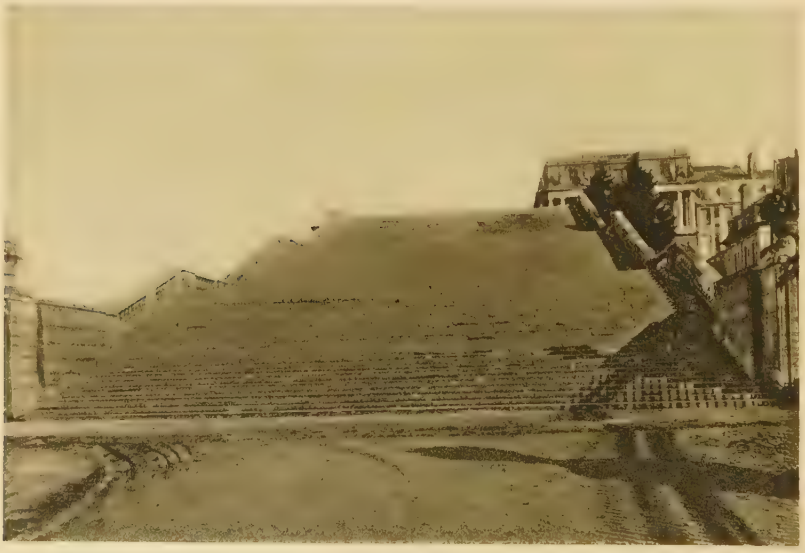
It was not long before a third Versailles rose from the earth, to which Jules-Hardouin Mansart, the grand-nephew of François, devoted his talent; and by adding two supplementary wings — the South Wing,



The God of the Garonne.

adjoining the Queen's Apartments, and the North Wing, adjoining the King's Apartments — completed an edifice which was already vast and imposing. This Versailles was contemporaneous with Madame de Maintenon's residence at the palace, with the construction — again by Mansart — of the educational establishment of Saint-Cyr, and with the performances of *Athalie* and *Esther* at Saint-Cyr and in the palace respectively. To this more restrained and graver period also belongs the construction of the Grand Gallery, or Galerie des Glaces, lighted by seventeen lofty circular-headed windows overlooking the park and embracing the infinite vista of the Tapis Vert and the Grand Canal.

The first time Madame de Sévigné entered this dazzling apartment — reflecting on every side in its mirrors the carved or chased ornaments due for the most part to Coysevox, Philippe Caffieri, Tubi and the goldsmith Ladoireau — and saw the ceiling upon which Le Brun has painted the King between the two greatest soldiers of his day, the Marshal de Turenne and the Prince de Condé, she exclaimed that it was the most consummate realisation of a truly " royal beauty " that



Versailles. The Hundred Steps.

Versailles. The Orangery.

she had ever seen. She might with equal justice have applied the same epithet to the Marble Staircase, by which the Queen could come and go between the great Salle des Gardes and the salon known as the Œil-de-Bœuf; likewise to the King's bedroom with its white and gold carved panelling, where, above the alcove in which he slept, Nicolas Coustou had placed a symbolic group representing France watching over the King, or rather, over the King's slumbers. She might also have applied it to the Chapel, with its austere yet bold lines and ingenious elevation, which was started by Hardouin Mansart and finished later by Robert de Cotte.

M. Paul Gruyer has most aptly said of this chapel, with the brilliant light streaming through its windows, its rich chasing, and the harmonious blend of gold and white stone which add lustre to it, that it is " like the palace of God in the palace of the King ". Between the death of Louis XIV and the Revolution, the interior of this palace, thus conceived and carried out as a whole, underwent many transfor-

Versailles. The Hall of Mirrors.

mations. Thus a fourth and fifth Versailles were added to those which had gone before : the more frivolous and voluptuous Versailles of Louis XV, glorified by the brilliance of Nattier and the sensuous compositions of Boucher and Lemoyne — the Versailles

Versailles. The Loggia of the Marble Stairway.

Versailles. Interior of the Chapel.

where Madame de Pompadour and Madame du Barry reigned in queenly state; and finally the last phase of Versailles, under Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette, still frivolous and delightful, the Versailles of miniature boudoirs, miniature mirrors, miniature apartments and miniature furniture, a Versailles to which a woman's hand added such delicacy and grace, such fine and artful restraint that even now one cannot visit it without emotion.

Versailles. The Marble Stairway.

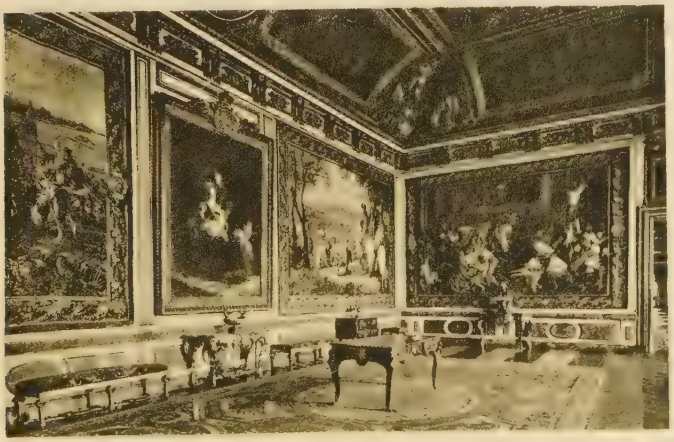
This Versailles, altogether in the spirit of the Trianon and Hubert-Robert, was the one known and commemorated by André Chénier.

« O Versailles, ô bois, ô portiques,
Marbres vivants, berceaux antiques... »

(Versailles of the forests
[and colonnades,
life-breathing marbles
[and antique arbours.)

It also witnessed the decline of the monarchy and the first disorders of the Revolution. The late Georges Cain has related in a picturesque and suggestive page how, led by M. Pierre de Nolhac, then curator of the château, he followed step by step the progress of the King and Queen during the tragic days of October 5 and 6, 1789. The famous hall of the King's guards *(Salle des Gardes)* in which now hangs David's *Distribution des Aigles*, still exists in very much the same state as at that period. It was here that one of

The Queen's Guard Room.



The Queen's Antechamber.

Marie Antoinette's Boudoir.

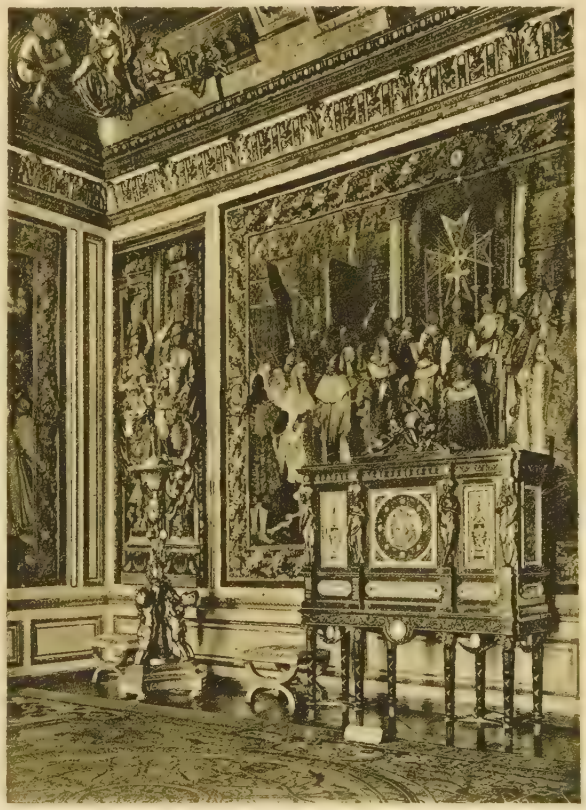
gilded floral ornaments framing the crossed double L of Louis XV, it opens into what was once the Queen's first antechamber, and against this door M. de Nolhac has been careful to place the superb bust of Marie-Antoinette by Leconte. "

Since, thanks to Georges Cain's picturesque description, M. de Nolhac has made his appearance in this palace which was once his residence, and for which he has done so much, we must not fail to take him as our guide during our visit to the gardens. It is he who said that for preference they

the Gardes du Corps, M. Miomandre de Sainte-Marie, harassed and pursued by a howling and excited mob from Paris, fell mortally wounded. Before he expired, this heroic young man had the time and courage to open a little door, through which the Queen was able to escape. " The door before which M. de Miomandre was wounded, " writes Georges Cain, " is before us here : painted grey, with

Amorini by Masson.

ought to be visited in the autumn, " on one of the remaining sunny days, when the trees have not lost their leaves and the walks are beginning to be deserted. " A poet who loves Versailles almost as much as Venice, and has called it the City of the Waters, M. Henri de Régnier, has also told us that this season, which clothes the woods with a sort of magnificent decay, is the most favourable and enables us best to appreciate the splendours and secret charm of the groves and gardens. And I believe this tradition goes back to their very origin. When La Fontaine visited these very shades to seek a setting for his Psyche, and to walk at Versailles with his friends Molière, Racine and Boileau, it was also during the autumn. " I saw plants, I saw marbles, I saw liquid crystal, I saw animals and men. " The sly humourist also saw the hall of shell-work known as the Grotto of Thetis, afterwards transformed under Louis XVI into the Baths of Apollo



In the Queen's Room.

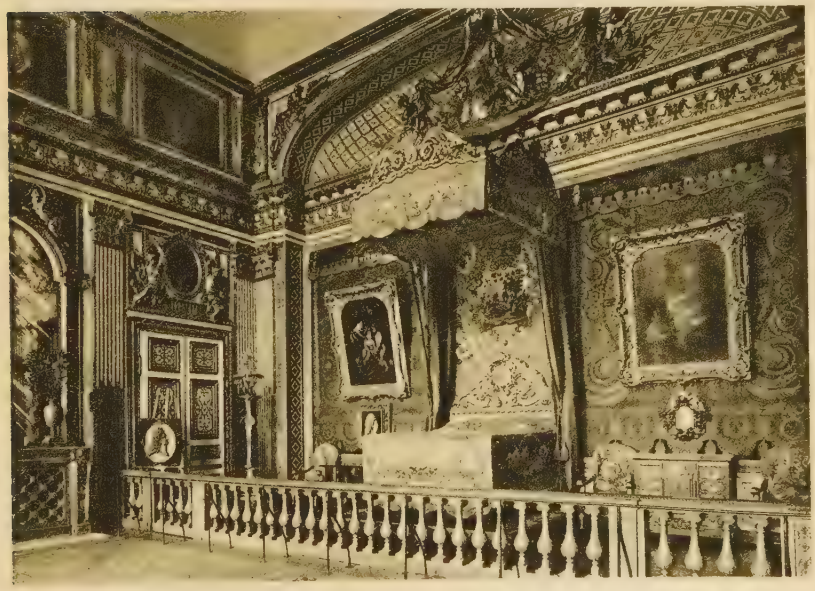
The Salon of the Round Windows.

by Hubert-Robert. And finally, he saw the Orangery. " One day when you go to Versailles, " writes M. André Hallays, in his turn associating himself with this tradition, " take the story of the Loves of Cupid and Psyche, and read it again on a marble bench... "

And as you climb the Hundred Steps of the Orangery, before entering the domain of Le Nostre and wandering from the Bassin de Latone to the Bassin d'Apollon, and from the Bassin d'Apollon to that of Neptune, do not fail to read Musset :

Louis XIV.

Mais vous souvient-il, mon ami,
De ces marches de marbre rose
En allant à la pièce d'eau
Du côté de l'Orangerie
A gauche en sortant du château?



The King's Apartment.

(But do you remember, my friend, the steps of pink marble as you go towards the lake from the Orangery, on the left as you leave the château?)

Poets are the best guides, and instinctively the most enlightened — they and historians. " You know Le Nostre's manner, " said Madame de Sévigné, whom we have already seen wondering at so much splendour and " beauty ". This " manner " is uniformly admirable. It consists in taking an unpromising site, a countryside with woods growing at random, and by means of earthworks, remodelling, and more or less skilful plantations on geometrical lines, transforming these lowering

Louis XIV.

like Coysevox's delightful *Nymphe à la coquille* or in bronze, like Leramber's little *Marmousets* — are like a pure and harmonious echo of this vast achievement, wrested, as it were, from Nature.

For this is how we should understand Le Nostre, with his uniform and ordered conceptions, which recast the landscape, correcting and adapting it according to a coherent plan. Under his hand, to quote an author who has given one of the most subtle analyses of his work, and who — since Clagny, Bellevue, Saint-Cloud and Meudon

woods and this uneven site into a garden of Armida, risen, as it were, out of the earth in a spot where such a thing would seem impossible, with its intersecting walks, its mirror-like canals, a world of vases with their drooping garlands of flowers, and a whole population of statues, all of which have not been respected by vandals, but many of which — whether in marble,

Louis XVI.

no longer exist — has come here, like others, to understand and appreciate him in his work, " under his hands, a landscape which was merely pleasant and charming takes on all the qualities of beauty. " (Lucien Corpechot,

Marie-Antoinette after Vigée-Le Brun.

Les jardins de l'intelligence). One does not perceive these qualities all at once, and it takes some time for their perfection to make itself felt and impress itself on the mind by its simple and restrained harmony.

The same is the case of all the great achievements of that period which we have agreed to call " classic ". And Le Nostre's art has something in common with that of Poussin and Claude : when they set out to represent on their canvasses one of those landscapes adorned with beautiful temples standing in the valleys or on the heights, sometimes beside a river, sometimes facing the sea, one at first sees nothing but faint outlines and a dimly perceived plan; it is not till afterwards that we see the picture, but when we do, it is as a whole, in such a way that these outlines, this plan and these broad lines only exist to aid in the general effect, support its structure and display it in its finished realisation.

A letter of Le Vau's, written from Saint-Germain in 1663, about the time when Le Nostre was starting the first design for the original gardens at Versailles, already bears witness to this " manner ", as Madame de Sévigné called it : " M. le Nostre, " Le Vau informs us, " is here with a number of workmen, to make the parterre opposite the end of the great gallery of the King's Apartments, where there used to be a plantation of plum-trees which has been cut down. The earth has been

Versailles. The Apollo Basin.

Versailles. The Dragon Basin.

levelled, and to-morrow they will begin planting box ". It was Le Nostre who introduced box into these designs, a tree beloved of Olivier de Serres, who sings its praises, and which will assume any form. In a well-planned setting of verdure it also recalls Claude Mollet, Henry IV's gardener, who, long before the appearance of Le Nostre, had conceived the idea of " gardens of perfect pleasure, " an idea which his successor was to start carrying into effect with the spade and rake, and convert into a wonder.

When Louis XIV, who had just conferred noble rank upon Le Nostre, invited him to choose his coat of arms, he wittily replied, with that smiling good humour which made him so pleasant to deal with, that he already bore arms, in the shape of three slugs surmounted by a head of cabbage. The juxtaposition of this head of cabbage with box and orange trees on the escutcheon of the great organiser of royal parks and gardens has a pleasing unexpectedness. But cabbage, radishes and

salad belonged more to the sphere of La Quintinie than to that of Le Nostre. The statue of this rustic celebrity is still to be seen in the former King's kitchen-garden *(Potager du roi)* which still exists at Versailles, transformed into a school of horticulture, between the church of St. Louis

Versailles. The Great Fountains.

and the gate of the Orangery. From here we may proceed, by way of contrast, to the Tennis Court near by, in a retired corner of old Versailles, now once more fallen into peace and silence after all the disturbances which it has seen.

In the Tennis Court has been housed the Museum of the Revolution, in memory of the oath taken by the deputies of the Third Estate on June 20. This museum will be of interest to the inquiring and the learned, and those enthusiastic about the great historical events which, towards the end of the reign of Louis XVI, were to give the town and château of Versailles a novel aspect, quite different from that which they had hitherto worn. For palaces and castles, like their inhabitants, are trans-

formed by time, grief or misfortune, and assume a new face. In order, then, to recapture the vanished 18th century as we love to imagine it, with all its melancholy and sweetness, instead of lingering over the memories of the Revolution, the war of 1870, the Commune of 1871 and the recent Peace Treaty, let us hasten towards those charming retreats the two Trianons. The Trianons may be regarded as

The Rape of Proserpine.

Cupid.

the complement of Versailles, its pleasing continuation. Before Mansart and Robert de Cotte built the existing stucture at the end of the right arm of the Grand Canal, there was an original Trianon, known as the Porcelain Trianon, from the facings of Dutch pottery and tiles covering its walls, which produced a most charming effect as the sun played upon them in their rustic surroundings. Even nowadays we seem to catch something of this play of light on the splendid pillars of pink and green marble which adorn the colonnade of the Grand Trianon. But it is in the Petit Trianon, even more than in the

Diana by Desjardins.

its sober charm, its mannered delicacy and exquisite quaintness.

This fragile gem of stonework, this delicate architectural jewel, set as

Neptune. Detail.

Grand, that French art can be seen in its supreme distinction, with all

Venus and Cupid.

though by a fairy hand among its groves and tender verdure, was designed by Jacques-Ange Gabriel. Louis XV gave it as a present first to Madame de Pompadour, then to Madame du

Barry; and finally, Bachaumont relates with what really charming gallantry Louis XVI presented it to the Queen of France at the opening of his reign.

As dauphiness Marie-Antoinette had already longed to possess a

The Basin of Latona looking towards the Grand Canal.

pleasure-house built in some remote spot, where she could live far from the court and close to nature. The new monarch had hardly come to the throne when he remembered this wish and considered how he might gratify it. He had both the Trianons put into order, and invited the queen to come and see them, when he had the following surprise in store for her : " Madame ", he said most gracefully, receiving her a way surprising in a prince who is too often represented as clumsy and awkward, " Madame, I am now in a position to gratify your wish. Pray accept the Grand and Petit Trianon for your own especial use. These lovely spots have always been the resort of the favourites of kings; they ought in consequence to be yours. "

The Russian traveller Karamzin, the Englishman Arthur Young,

The Grand Trianon.

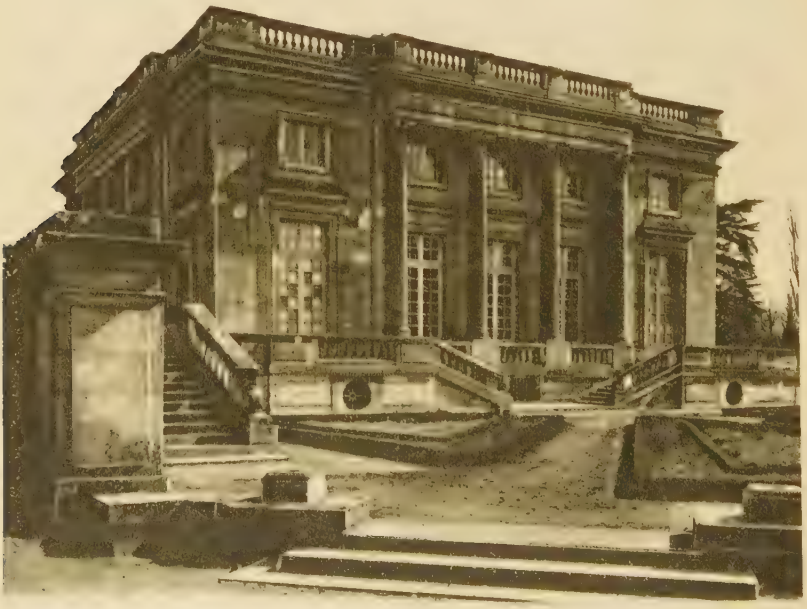
the Duc de Croy, in fact all curious travellers or men of letters at the end of the 18th century, are unfailing in their praise of the Trianons, with their masses of flowers, clipped trees and exotic plants. The Queen's cottage, adorned with a miniature farm and dairy, a pigeon-house, a Temple of Love (the statue of *Love carving his bow out of the club of Hercules* is by Bouchardon), and lastly the theatre, in which the Queen herself used

The Temple of Cupid.

Marie-Antoinette's Cottage.

to act before the King, all bear witness to the sovereignty free from despotism wielded by Marie-Antoinette. The Prince de Ligne, the greatest garden-lover who ever existed, said, after visiting these spots, that " there must be magic in it, " but it was a sovereign and delightful magic.

It is not only in this little toy village, with its rustic buildings and miniature appointments planned by the architect Mique, that this magic dominates everything and carries all before it, nor even in the plantations of the cottage carried out by Antoine Richard; it is in the whole plan of the gardens laid out and planted round the two Trianons. One day, as he was dreaming along these shady walks after leaving the rather cynical society of his creation " Rameau's Nephew ", and the gaming-houses of the Palais Royal, Diderot wrote : " I remember walking in the gardens of the Trianon. It was at sunset. The air was sweet with the fragance of flowers. I said to myself : ' The Tuileries



The Petit Trianon.

The Petit Trianon. The Salon.

are lovely, but it is sweeter to be here... ' "

Yes, it is sweet to be here; and, as Diderot felt, it is lovely to come at sunset and sit on these stone benches, to listen to the sigh of the wind, the passing breeze which seems to whisper among the leaves, the drip of raindrops or a blackbird's song. It is then that we realise that these gardens, which are instinct with the gentle enchantment of a vanished age, a woman's caprice, and the genius of French art, are unique in the world, and that nothing, not even the gardens of Tuscany or Lombardy, can be compared to this beauty this order, in short, to what the Prince de Ligne called this subtle " magic ", peculiar to the Ile-de-France, which seems to enfold the whole landscape in a varied play of lights seen as through a veil.

Not far from Versailles and the Trianons, Saint-Cyr protects the school founded by another queen, namely Madame de Maintenon. To this calm retreat she had moved the school for poor daughters of noble

houses which she had established first at the Château de Rueil and afterwards at Noisy-le-Grand. That was her work and in it she was interested all her life. Even Louis XIV in the last years of his reign loved to take the route to Saint-Cyr. Racine wrote *Esther* and *Athalie* for the pensionnaires of Madame de Maintenon, and it was to Saint-Cyr that she retired after the death of Louis XIV. She had always loved this shelter and the youth whose development she could observe close at hand and of whom she was the enlightened guide. She, who before she became queen, well knew the difficulties of a life often precarious, was well fitted to undertake such a work. This royal school was suppressed at the Revolution. Napoleon subsequently on the site established the Military School of Saint-Cyr which exists to-day. To visit the Museum in which are relics of the 5000 St. Cyriens who fell in the Great War is most moving.

The Petit Trianon from the Park.

Port-Royal-des-Champs.

CHAPTER IV

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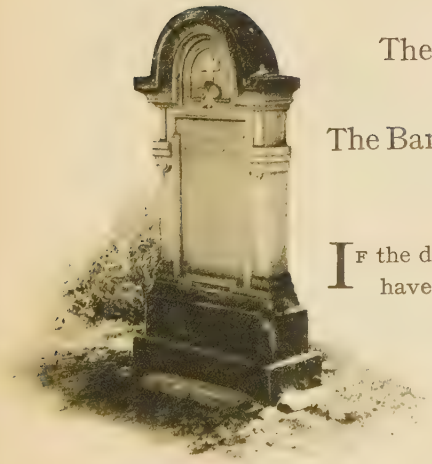


Monument to Racine.

The Gardens of Seine-et-Oise : Port-Royal. The Banks of the Seine : Saint-Germain, Marly, La Malmaison.

If the description of the Ile-de-France which we have here undertaken were to be treated entirely in the poetic vein, it seems to me that we should not only have to praise the gardens of Seine-et-Oise, in which Le Nostre had a hand — and

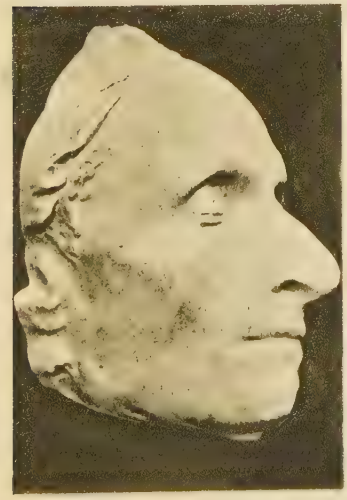
particularly Dampierre, which is a very fine achievement and a great estate — but I think we should also have to linger over an enumeration of all the oases and verdant retreats, even the humblest and most retired of them, to which studious minds, contemplative hearts or proud souls have come to seek repose or enjoy the silence in all ages.

Philippe de Champaigne. Portrait of Angélique Arnauld.

In the neighbourhood of Dampierre, indeed, not far from royal Versailles and Madame de Maintenon's Saint-Cyr, is Port-Royal, with its modern chapel, in which are collected the memorials of Jansenism. Here too, are its old pigeon-house, its "Solitude", and the dismantled ruins of its church. I can never approach this spot without a melancholy recollection of Renan's words in a sort of eulogy which he composed on the gardens of the Ile-de-France : " Every time I see an old French house in Seine-et-Oise or Seine-et-Marne, with its garden and clipped trees, my imagination conjures up before me the austere books that have been read along these walks. "

Church at Magny-les-Hameaux.

The walks of Port-Royal, which are particularly suggested to us by these lines, have become in course of time covered with grass and overgrown with moss; and if we did not still possess descriptions of them in prose and verse, engravings, and above all the bird's eye view in bold relief made by Magdeleine Hortemels, we should no longer have any record of the arrangement of the cloister, the building in which " Messieurs de Port-Royal " had their lodging, or Madame de Longueville's residence. But there is yet another witness to whose testimony we may appeal : namely the view outlined by Philippe de Champaigne's reverent and faithful brush in the background of his portrait of Mère Angélique, representing part of the



Abbey of Port-Royal.
Death Mask of Pascal.

The Château and Forest of Dampierre.

valley and the buildings of the old monastery. The cemetery, with its humble crosses and box-edged paths, no longer exists; and even the tomb of M. Hamon, the wise scholar of Port-Royal, at the foot of which Jean Racine requested in his will that he might be laid to rest, was desecrated when the abbey was pulled down in 1709. So that those who now wish to venerate the memory of these recluses must go and indulge their contemplative vein either in Paris, at Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, where lie Pascal and Racine; or at Palaiseau, where the remains of the great Arnauld, Arnauld d'Andilly and the two sainted women of Port-Royal, Mère Angélique and Mère Agnès, were transported; or else at Boullay-les-Troux or Magny-les-Hameaux.

The charming little village of Magny is situated on the banks of the Mérautaise, a tiny tributary of the Yvette, a little above Milon-la-Chapelle, between Châteaufort and Trappes. An ancient cemetery, a venerable church, the little orchards which surround the village, and the silence which enfolds it, add still more to its poetic charm; here we may listen to the rustle of the poplars, the murmur of the reeds and

Chevreuse.

the silvery tinkle of the brooks, as they glide upon their wilful way beneath the willows and among the cresses.

No region could be more fertile or better watered by springs; between Versailles and Paris on the one hand, and Versailles and Rambouillet on the other, we find not only prattling streams like the Bièvre or the Yvette, little water-courses like the brook of Les Vaux (Ru des Vaux) coming from Cernay, and the brook of La Mauldre (towards Elancourt) which diffuse coolness as they make their way through every meadow and pasture; but other waters too, which gather on the high plateaux, and, drained off by a vast system of trenches, known as *rigoles*, especially above Vauhallan or the plain of Trappes, go to feed the ponds which are so frequent in this part of the Ile-de-France. Haunted by wild fowl and wild duck, their stagnant waters slumbering in the midst of heaths covered with broom and gorse, these reed-grown, osier-fringed pools, like those of Saclay, Le Trou-Salé, and, above all, the vast pool of Saint-Quentin, between Trappes and Saint-Cyr, add by their wide expanse to the melancholy of these solitary spaces.

Chevreuse.

The Valley of Chevreuse.

Above the Valley of the Bièvre, not far from the little district of Josas, stretching from Jouy and Les Loges-en-Josas to Bièvre and Vauboyen, an aqueduct built in the 17th century still recalls the ingenious system of irrigation which consisted in collecting the water from the ponds thus formed and carrying it to the Grand Canal at Versailles. The " squares of golden corn, " the pools " with their clear waters, "

« Et l'aqueduc au loin qui forme un pont dans l'air. »
(And the aqueduct afar which forms a bridge in the air.)

Such was, and such, on the whole, still remains the flowery valley between Buc, the Château des Roches and Bièvres, where Victor Hugo lived, where his memory still dwells, and whose cool windings and rustic valley he has praised in fine verses — especially those on the hamlet of Mets — as well as the paths through little copses of hazel and chestnut by which he used to go and meet his Juliette.

Ornamental arbours, geometrically designed walks, swelling masses

Les Vaux de Cernay.

of shrubs, arches covered with starry clematis, masses of roses, privet hedges, a willow-trunk, the fragrance of honeysuckle — all these suffice to give the gardens round Versailles, Saint-Germain and Marly a brilliance, a fragrance and a radiance only to be found here, on the fringe of this historic region, beneath a sky rich in atmospheric effects, amid the changing glimmer of the waters and the rustle of leafage.

An English visitor to Saint-Cloud, whose fleeting but happy impressions have been recalled by M. André Hallays, Miss Anne Plumptre, was greatly struck, in the early days of the Consulate, by the quivering, wave-like effect produced by the wind and the play of light on the dense foliage of varied hues, descending in a slope from the wooded heights all down the hill sides. " I was struck, " she wrote, " with the charms of Saint-Cloud; the cascades and waterfalls are magnificent, it is true, but *the woods drooping like a bunch of grapes over the Seine* have a beauty which none of the efforts of art can surpass. "

These masses of trees to which Miss Plumptre alludes, drooping over the river, clinging together in a bunch, forming as it were a sort of

terrace above the steep slopes overhanging the great deep ravine at the bottom of which flows the Seine, do indeed produce a noble and charming effect. Their arrangement, rather resembling that of the villas of Italy is calculated to appeal to artists, and we know that Joseph Vernet and Hubert-Robert loved to rediscover in these parts, especially at Saint-Cloud and Louveciennes, the scenes which they had so often drawn and painted at the Villa d'Este, the Boboli gardens, and those of Verona. It is true that, since Robert and Vernet's day, time and the hand of man have somewhat destroyed this order. All symmetry has disappeared, but nature has retained her capricious tendency, and her verdant growth is still the same. Beyond Saint-Germain, beyond Marly, there are still the same distant prospects, the same open horizon. Through the forest of Saint-Germain, which consists largely of beech, oak, chestnut and hornbeam, and is enclosed in a loop of the Seine, fine avenues are cut connecting the town of Saint-Germain with the educational establishment at Les

Château of Cour-Senlisse.

Château of Maisons-Laffitte.

Loges, with the Croix de Noailles, the Pavillon de la Muette, and, lastly, the neighbourhood and park of Maisons.

Château of Maisons-Laffitte. Dining-room.

When we catch sight of Maisons, or Maisons-Laffitte, from Sartrouville, a market-town in what used to be a vine-growing district on the opposite bank, we obtain a good general view,

especially of its most remarkable feature, namely the Château. Built in the 17th century by François Mansart for René de Longueil, a president of the supreme court *(Parlement)* of Paris, this sumptuous

The Seine between Poissy and Villennes.

residence was once surrounded by gardens laid out in the French style. The richness of its collections, the beauty of the building and the delights of its gardens made it so perfect in every respect that, as Perrault tells us, " no curious traveller fails to go and see it, as one of the most beautiful things we have in France. "

It is true that in the course of years the château of Maisons has undergone some alteration; it has been stripped of its gardens and woods, but it has become the property of the nation, and, retaining as it does some of the works of art that used to adorn it, especially its statues, its rich tapestries and above all its marble mantel-pieces adorned with reliefs or medaillons, it still presents a fine appearance; and in spite of the changes which took place in it during the last century, we can

The Seine at Villennes.

The Seine between Poissy and Villennes.

understand why Louis XIV loved to visit it, why Voltaire enjoyed staying there while composing the *Henriade*, and later, in the time of the banker Laffitte, why Benjamin Constant too found a charm in taking refuge there, on leaving Luzarches and Coppet.

The rustic simplicity of the church tower of Maisons forms a contrast with its noble and splendid château; but that of Mesnil-le-Roi, not far from Maisons, is no less modest in appearance. To find a church of a less heavy description and a more developed plan, we must cross the forest from Mesnil-

The Church of Poissy.

le-Roi or Maisons by way of the Croix de Noailles, when we shall see the church of Notre-Dame above the last trees of the forest and the first plantations of elms in the provincial town of Poissy. Viollet-le-Duc, whose talent was responsible for the restoration of this building, wrote that, with its two towers and somewhat heterogeneous chapels, the church of Poissy is " a confused mass " of buildings of every century. Among the remains of the part which have survived, we may indicate the font, revered by many generations of the faithful, in which the future St. Louis, the child of Poissy, is said to have been baptised. Not far away can be seen the remains of the famous abbey founded by Philippe le Bel, of which the massive towers and high, ivy-clad walls are still visible. It was in this very abbey that, by order of Catherine de' Medici and at the request of the Chancellor Michel de l'Hôpital, there was held in 1561 the famous Colloquy of Poissy between Catholic and Protestant theologians, which it was hoped would put an end to the disputes between the League and the Calvinists, but which failed in its work of conciliation.

The Bridge at Poissy.

From the Terrace of Saint-Germain, looking towards Maisons-Laffitte.

At that time the Court often visited Saint-Germain, and Queen Catherine would appear there, either during the life of her husband, Henri II, or during the reign of her eldest son Francis II, sometimes with a train of astrologers and Florentine artificers, sometimes in the more pleasing company of the " flying squadron " of her maids of honour, all of them beautiful and spirited, among whom were Marie de Limeuil and Madame de Sauve. As for Mary Stuart, afterwards Queen of Scots, who loved nothing better than hunting, and delighted in this forest rich in game, she loved staying here almost as much as at Fontainebleau.

Like Fontainebleau, it is the château that lends lustre to Saint-Germain. It was designed partly by Pierre Chambiges, Francis I's architect, but Guillaume Guillain, his son-in-law, also worked upon it with his partner Jean Langlois. M. Paul Gruyer writes that except for a few additions, among which are the Pavillon Henri IV and the Pavillon Sully, the main body of the original structure of the château " with

Château of Saint-Germain.

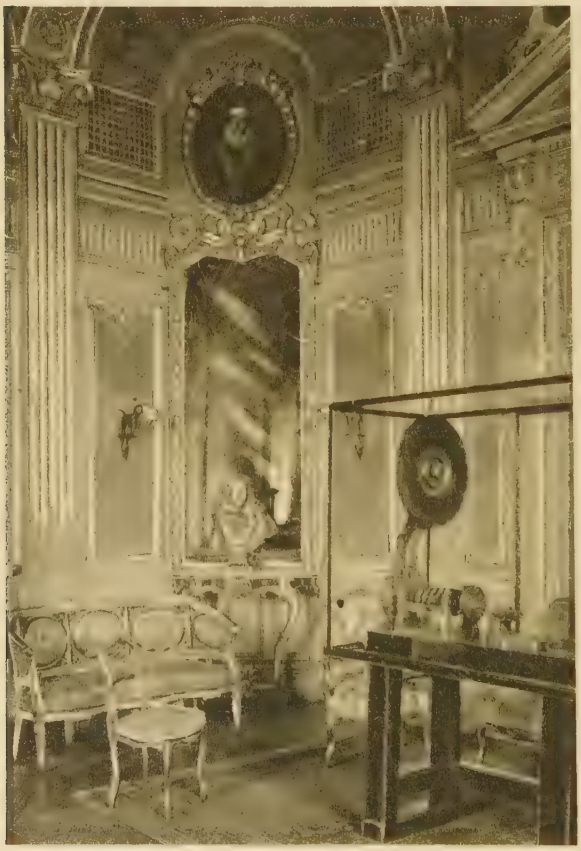
Château of Saint-Germain. The Entrance.

its mixture of warm white stone and courses of red brick, " its moats, its covered walk round the battlements, preserved from the ancient fortress, its loggias and terraces, has hardly varied since the 16th century, and still wears almost the same aspect as it did then. We can see, however, from an engraving by Israel Sylvestre that, unlike to-day, " formal gardens adorned with clipped yews, framed in rosette-shaped designs of box, and gay with flowers, " stretched as far as the Seine, descending in slopes and steps, so ingeniously

Evening. Château of Saint-Germain.

constructed that the interior of these terraces was arranged in charming grottoes of shell-work, one of which, situated beneath the saloon of what is now the Pavillon Henri IV, is still in existence.

During the reign of Louis XIII the court spent months on end at Saint-Germain, and to this period Mme de Motteville ascribes the touching episode of Mlle de la Fayette, who was in love with the King and retired into a convent for love of him. She came and stood behind a window to see him pass for the last time. " When she had seen him depart, she exclaimed, stricken with sorrow : ' Alas ! I shall never see him again ! ' and she wept bitterly. " There is an inscription on the pediment of this same pavilion, built in the reign of Henri IV, recording that on September 5, 1638 Louis XIV was born in this city of the Ile-de-France, in memory of which the new King several times made a point of visiting Saint-Germain. It was by his orders, too, that between 1669 and 1673 Le Nostre took in hand the construction of the long terrace between the new château and that of Le Val, a terrace unrivalled in



Museum of the Pavilion of Henri IV.

Marly. The Park and Château.

France and perhaps in Europe, with the forest behind it, looking out over the Seine, and with a view which extends over Le Pecq, beyond Marly and Louveciennes, as far as Mont Valérien and Montmartre.

" Saint Germain, peerless in its combination of a marvellous view with the forest adjoining it on the same level, peerless too in the beauty of its trees, its surroundings, its situation, the wondrous charm of its gardens, the height of its terraces. " Yet Louis XIV was not content with a palace which, though splendid, was too small for him, so he decided to abandon it, and placed it at the disposal of James II, the exiled King of England, himself retiring to Versailles or Marly.

Versailles is, as we have seen, a dazzling abode, something like a caliph's palace in the Arabian Nights, only built in the French style,

Marly. The Reservoir.

Marly. Gateway of the Old Château.

and in which everything — not only the general plan but the details also — is in keeping with the glory of its master, who had taken the sun for his emblem. But Marly, though brilliantly adorned with all the finest devices invented by the magic art of Mansart and Lebrun, was more intimate and restrained in style, more truly in keeping with the sovereign's private life. Saint-Simon tells us that the charm of this royal residence consisted in the fact that it was sometimes possible to find there something " small and solitary ", Racine entirely confirms this, and

has expressed it to perfection in a letter to Boileau. " The King, " he writes, " is very much at ease here, and most affectionate. At Versailles he gives the impression of being entirely absorbed in affairs, while at Marly he is quite at liberty for his own interests and pleasures. "

Louveciennes.

The numerous apartments, with their profusion of works of art, the variety of the gardens, the diversity of the ornamental waters, especially the cascades and stone basins once full of carp, and the fine plantations, not to speak of the concerts, theatre, drives and walks, went to make up a most desirable retreat in summertime. Only certain privileged persons were admitted, by the King's express order, and for a short period. " The King, " says the Abbé de Choisy, " designated those who were to follow him to Marly, and Bontemps, the valet de chambre, lodged them two by two in the various pavilions. " Finally, he says, " Madame de Maintenon was a great figure here, and the King passed all his evenings with her. "

Later, towards the end of a century which had opened amidst such

scenes as these only to end in disorders, Madame Vigée Lebrun chanced to meet Queen Marie-Antoinette " walking in the park with a number of her court ladies. They were all in white dresses, and so young and lovely that they were like a vision. " Alas ! this vision was to be the last to shed its full beauty and brilliance upon this residence before it faded away. " When I returned to France in 1802, " concudes Madame Lebrun, " I hastened to revisit my noble and smiling Marly. Palace, trees, cascades and fountains — everything had disappeared; all I could find was a single stone, which seems to mark the centre of the salon. " All the works of art had perished save the Horses of Marly, the work of the sculptor Coustou, whose rearing forms we can still admire to-day at the end of the Avenue des Champs-Elysées, towards the Place de la Concorde, where they were placed after they were brought back to Paris, saved from the vandalism of the revolutionaries.

Two other traces of the Palace of Marly are still left; first, near the Trou d'Enfer, a sort of flat and sandy region where the reviews of the King's household troops used to take place, there is the great reser-

Malmaison. In the Park.

Château of Malmaison.

voir; and secondly, the aqueduct with thirty-five arches known as the Aqueduct of Louveciennes, which is still in existence, and lends the landscape in the region a sort of noble and antique beauty characteristic of the Campagna and the monuments in the neighbourhood of Rome. As to Louveciennes itself, it must be observed that it has suffered less than Marly, for the reason, which will easily be understood, that it was less a collection of palaces than of pleasure-houses.

The chief of these summer residences, which has survived the upheaval better than Marly, was the charming little house built by the architect Ledoux, and presented by Louis XV to Madame du Barry. Its white and graceful outline still rests on the wooded brow of the hill to-day, like a fragile diadem of filigree. Madame Vigée Lebrun, who is certainly the most knowledgeable and well-informed guide to this region steeped in memories of the eighteenth century, relates how, long after the death of Louis XV, she once came to Louveciennes to paint Madame du Barry's portrait (now in the Library at Versailles), which gave her another opportunity of visiting this graceful abode, so lovely

Château of Malmaison.

in its exquisite decoration, in which every object, down to the lamp-brackets, locks and mantel-pieces, was wrought in the finest and most costly style. Among all the apartments in the house, the salon was distinguished by its aspect, facing one of the most charming landscapes in the Ile-de-France; " From thence, " said Madame Lebrun, " one enjoys the most beautiful view in the world. " And, as we know, this view from the heights of Louveciennes — " Luciennes ", as it was then called — delighted not only Madame Lebrun but also André Chénier. In one direction, it embraced the whole bend of the river towards Saint-Germain and Marly, and overlooked Chatou and

Bust of Napoleon.

Saint-Cloud. The Cascades.

Croissy; in the other it took in the "pretty church-tower of Bougival" at whose spire Victorien Sardou was so fond of looking when he owned Marly; and beyond Bougival the view extended as far as Rueil and La Malmaison. But here we find the most poignant memories in the Ile-de-France, those of the Napoleonic period, which arrest and dominate the mind in this spot more than in any other.

Madame Le Brun writes, again in her *Souvenirs*, that she was once the guest of the Lecoulteux de Moley family at La Malmaison; it was from them that in 1799 Madame Bonaparte bought this property, afterwards made so famous by her residence there and that of the First Consul. It may be said that Josephine and Bonaparte already knew this region. During the revolutionary period Josephine had lived for a while at Croissy, not far away on the opposite bank of the Seine; and

The Empress Josephine. After Prud'hon.

Scene near Saint-Cloud.

she and Bonaparte had often visited Saint-Cloud. It was at Saint-Cloud that the general, in concert with his brother Lucien, prepared and carried out the famous *coup d'état* of Brumaire 18 and 19. This estate, in a retired spot between Rueil and Bougival, near the Seine, and not far from the woods adjoining La Celle-Saint-Cloud, where the pool of Saint-Cucufa is to be found, was perfectly suited by its solitude and remoteness from the capital to the indolent tastes of the creole Josephine. And no retreat was dearer to Napoleon when he was overwhelmed with work, reports and vast plans of campaign which had to be drawn up far from all men, in solitude and silence.

" When, on a Saturday evening, " writes Bourrienne, " Napoleon used to leave the Luxembourg, or, later, the Tuileries, to go to La Malmaison, I can only describe his pleasure by comparing it with that of school-boys when one goes to fetch them to spend a holiday with their family. " Set free from etiquette, far from camps and assemblies, Napo-

leon became simple and human again at Malmaison. He was as gay as a child, and played at *barres* like a young man. But he enjoyed yet another pleasure, namely, as Bourrienne says, that of " seeing a tall, slender woman, dressed in a white dress, walking in the shade of a leafy alley ".

After many vicissitudes the park and château of La Malmaison returned into the possession of the State, thanks to the generosity of M. Osiris, who also had removed from the door and set up at the end of a laurel alley the stone, crowned with a bronze eagle, which served as the Emperor's mounting block when he departed for the last time, and on which are carved the following words,

Napoleon's last step
On his departure for Rochefort
June 29, 1815,
At four o'clock in the afternoon.

Thus in the Ile-de-France every place, every estate, every stone even has its history. Time has set its mark on everything; and nothing leaves traces which move us more deeply.

The Lake of Saint-Cucufa.

The Château of Anet. Main Entrance.

CHAPTER V

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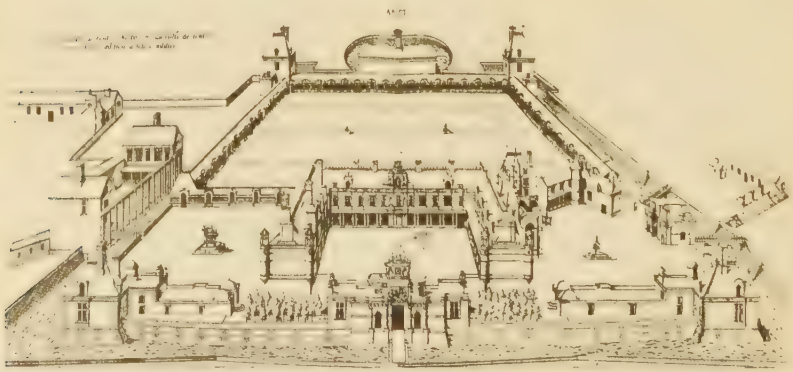
The Region of Dreux and Chartres. The Yveline and the Hurepoix.

To arrive on a fine day at the little town of Anet by way of Houdan, skirting the edge of the Forest of Dreux, is the pleasantest way of approaching the wooded borders of the Drouais, or region of Dreux, where it touches Normandy. We find on all sides pasture-lands divided by hedges, producing the effect of a woodland region; there are frequent copses or tall poplars to indicate that we are following the course of the Vesgre, and as this melodious stream draws near the town, it leads straight to the château.

We enter the basin of the Eure; and all at once everything is

smiling and cheerful. This is one of the loveliest corners of France, and even of the Ile-de-France. We have only to go a little further, to see appearing above the tree-tops first the delicate bell-tower *(Beffroi)* of the little town, and then the restored roofs and rebuilt walls of the ancient royal residence. But the chief survivals of that marvel of stone-work, the delicate and subtle masterpiece of which Philibert Delorme was the magically endowed creator, are the fine gateway, the cast in the middle of which is a reproduction of Benvenuto Cellini's nymph, the stag surmounting the gateway, and lastly the greyhounds, the punning arms of her who was mistress and queen here — besides the memorial chapel in which was erected the tomb of Diane de Poitiers.

We can obtain an idea of the commodiousness of the pavilions, the extent of the gardens, the slender and well-proportioned chimneys and gables of this great château from the plan and bird's-eye views drawn by Jacques Androuet de Cerceau in his *Les plus excellents bâtiments de France*. Never was the art of the Renaissance displayed with a more luxuriant and florid grace, even on the banks of the Loire. Not only Philibert Delorme worked here, but also Jean Goujon, to whom we owe the beautiful recumbent Diana, now one of the glories of the Lou-



Vue générale du château, au XVIe siècle
(D'après le dessin de Du Cerceau.)

The Château of Anet. Plan after a drawing by Du Cerceau.

The Château of Anet. The existing portion.

vre, which was torn from the château in 1798 by the " black bands " of the Directory, after they had almost entirely destroyed the building. And all these arcades and colonnades, these fantastically clipped and flowery groves, the enamels by Leonard Limousin (afterwards removed to the church of Saint-Pierre at Chartres) the statues and high and low reliefs, formed such a speaking and noble whole that Brantôme quoted it as a model of perfection, and Joachim du Bellay praised its fair arrangement in the following verses;

« Les marbres animés, la vivante peinture,
Les beaux lambris dorés, la luisante chapelle,
Les superbes donjons, la riche couverture,
Le jardin tapissé d'éternelle verdure. »

(The life-breathing marbles, the pictures which seem to live; the fair gilded panelling, the glittering chapel, the proud donjons, the richly ornamented roof, the garden carpeted with never-fading verdure.)

The garden, the enclosures adorned with vines and honeysuckle, and even the surrounding woods long preserved their original pleasing aspect, in spite of the changes which took place during the 17th and 18th centuries. La Fontaine himself, though hard to please, for he

Château of Anet. General View.

had devoted all his enthusiasm to singing the praises of Versailles and Vaux-le-Vicomte, loved staying here above all things, and loved these trees more than any others. In a letter dated from Anet which Florian wrote to Madame de la Briche at a later period, he made a very apt reference to the taste of the writer of the *Fables*. " I recommend to you, " he says to his correspondent, " the Bois des Cordeliers, planted by the great Vendôme. It is to these woods that La Fontaine alludes at the end of his charming and sublime poem *Philémon et Baucis*. "

Is it possible, we ask again, to find so many great names, so many gracious shades in one place; and in such a limited area, in a single house to bring together such glorious or fascinating relics of the past? Never,

A Nymph by Benvenuto Cellini.

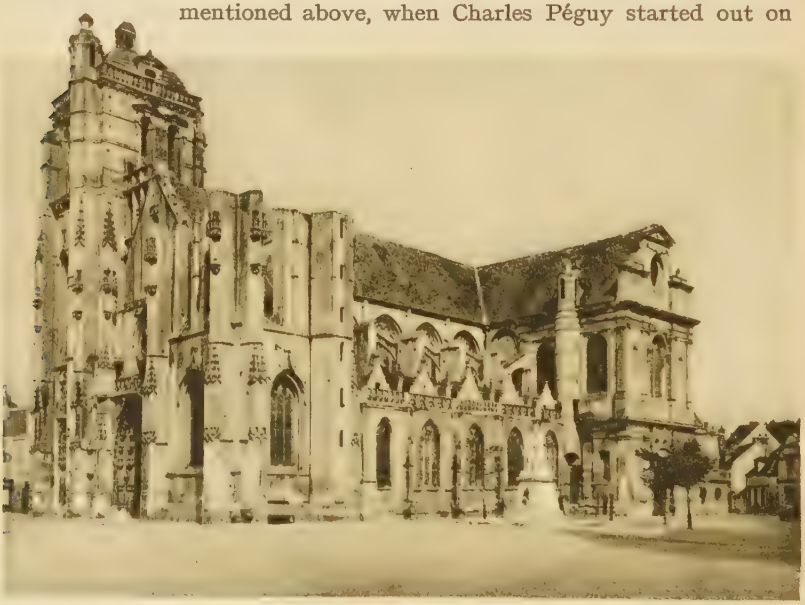
as Nodier could truly say in his *Ensemble de l'Ile-de-France*, do " the memories of love and pleasure, mingled with those of glory ", make a more brilliant appearance anywhere than in this little place, where a whole age delighted in collecting the most consummate and successful products of the arts; and nowhere do the disorders caused by Revolutions, commercialism and vandalism appear more odious than when we look upon the mutilation of master-pieces such as these.

If, instead of returning to Houdan from Anet, we turn southwards through the forest, and, leaving the course of the Eure, follow that of the aspen-fringed Blaise, losing itself in a maze of windings among the meadows, it will not be long before we reach Dreux. We at once see before us one of the most graceful town-halls of ancient France. Begun under Francis I, with its elaborate architecture and fantastic stone-work, it rises, slender and flamboyant, above the mossy roofs of the little

Diana by Jean Goujon.

capital of the Drouais. This municipal building, rivalling those of Etampes and Compiègne, reveals, even more than the imposing Royal Chapel, containing the tombs of the Orleans family, which dominates the town with its imposing mass, the intensity of local life which was so active at the time of the Renaissance, when cities like Dreux and Chartres stood on the marches of the Beauce, forming trading centres within easy reach of the Thimerais and the Drouais.

The region of Chartres is one of the granaries of France, stretching like one gigantic arable plain covered with wheat as far as the blue line formed by the twin streams of the Voise and the Eure, which flow through Nogent-le-Roi, Maintenon and Auneau. On the occasion mentioned above, when Charles Péguy started out on



Dreux. The Collegiate Church.

foot to make the pilgrimage to the great cathedral of La Beauce, buoyed up by a great impulse of religious fervour he followed, as it were staff in hand, a route passing through Lozère, Dourdan, Sainte-Mesme, and Auneau, on his way from Notre-Dame of Paris to Notre-Dame of

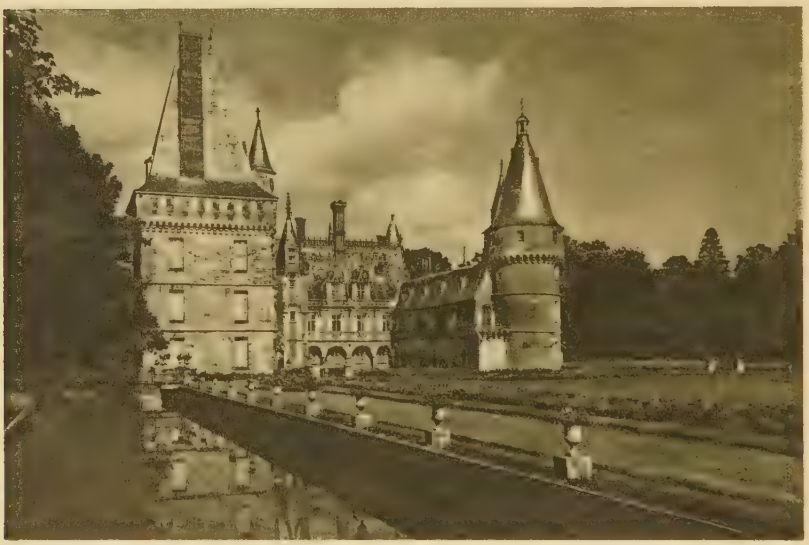
Chartres. As he stood before the great basilica to which his prayers mounted on high, that marvel of stone-work which raises its pointed spires above the haystacks, this good Samaritan of poetry held up his outstretched hands to Our Lady of the cornfields, Our Lady of the wheatears and sheaves of grain :

Nous arrivons vers vous
[de l'autre Notre-Dame
De celle qui s'élève au
[cœur de la cité,
Dans sa royale robe et
[dans sa majesté...
Nous arrivons vers vous
[du lointain Palaiseau

Dreux. Hôtel de Ville.

Dreux. The Church.

Et des faubourgs
[d'Orsay par Gometz-
[le-Châtel...
Nous avons eu bon
[vent de partir dès
[le jour.
Nous coucherons ce
[soir à deux pas
[de chez vous
Dans cette vieille
[auberge où pour
[quarante sous
Nous dormirons tout
[près de votre
[illustre tour.



Château de Maintenon.

(We have come to you from the other Notre-Dame, from her who rises in the heart of the city in her royal robe and majesty... We have come to you from distant Palaiseau and the regions of Orsay through Gometz-le-Châtel... We started with a favouring wind, before day-break. To-night we shall lie hard by your house, in that old inn where for forty sous we shall sleep near by your famous towers.)

Old House at Nogent-le-Roi.

This tower, or rather these towers of Notre-Dame de Chartres can be seen across country from afar. They are indeed like the mystic rigging of a mighty ship, the " Admiral " as Péguy called her, built by the master masons of mediaeval days, which bears on its façade, like a figure-head, the image of the Virgin Mother. We have hardly crossed the line formed by the waters

Chartres. The Cathedral.

Château de Maintenon.

of the Voise and the Eure when we can see them soaring side by side into the air. First from Nogent-le-Roi, which is verily the prettiest little old-fashioned town of ancient houses, flanked by the gates and posterns of olden days; and next from Maintenon.

With Maintenon and its château, famous as having harboured Françoise d'Aubigné, who, it is said, was married to Louis XIV here, in the very chapel of the château, we come back, as at Dreux and Anet, to the art of the Renaissance. But a Gothic tower and a few remains of the original castle add a massive and feudal touch to the house. It should be added that the waters of the Eure flow through the park, and that an avenue of ancient trees, to which the name of Racine is attached, forms a fine setting for the famous aqueduct started under Louis XIV, and afterwards abandoned. Its lofty arches and half-ruined but finely wrought arcading add a further beauty to this imposing spot, with its noble and royal associations.

Another sumptuous building of great magnificence, replete with

history, many parts of which also date from the Renaissance, though the château as a whole belongs to the 18th century, is Rambouillet. The Château was first designed as a fortress, and only began to assume a pleasing aspect at the time of Francis I's great hunting-parties, at which the King rode hard, with his hounds and huntsmen and the gentlemen of his court and suite, through the woods of Yveline and those of Hurepoix, well stocked with game. By the time the second Francis visited the château, its owner, Jacques d'Angennes, had added such fine new buildings to his dwelling that, shortly after the new wings were added, Brantôme wrote that the house, castle and town of Rambouillet " are very fine, great, illustrious, and renowned through all France. "

This renown seems to have somewhat declined since the State turned the Palace of Rambouillet into the summer residence of the Presidents of the Republic. It does not possess the brilliance of Fontainebleau, Chantilly or Versailles; but in spite of this, its many memories lend it such charm that it is worth while to linger there. The park surrounding the château, with its trees of many species, its avenue of

Château de Maintenon. The Courtyard.

Louisiana cypresses, its host of statues, its winding English river, its mirror-like lake stocked with fish, its sleeping canals, and formal gardens, still recalls the style in which it was laid out when Catherine de Vivonne, as Duchesse de Rambouillet, the famous Arthénice of the *Chambre bleue*, loved to walk about its shady avenues surrounded by a crowd of gallants, poets and learned ladies. Tallemant, who knows all about these lovely ladies, even their most audacious follies, has described Madame de Rambouillet in one of his *Historiettes*, with all her attendant ladies, among them M^lle^ Paulet, the original of Godeau's *Belle Rousse*, all simply dressed as nymphs, grouped before Philippe de Cospeau, Bishop of Lisieux, in the most charming of living pictures among the rocks.

Among the great and beautiful ladies who loved to visit this spot and play at shepherdesses amid the calm of the woods and the peace of Nature, should be mentioned Marie-Antoinette; but we must relate the circumstances in which it was thus honoured. The estate of Ram-

The Eure near Dreux.

Maintenon. Gardens and Aqueduct.

bouillet had formerly been the property of the d'Angennes family, next of Fleurian d'Armenonville, then of the Count of Toulouse, son of Louis XIV and Madame de Montespan, and lastly of the Duc de Penthièvre, and was then repurchased by Louis XIV. The new king added to the two side wings, built in the time of the Count of Toulouse, the outbuildings and the Hôtel du Bailliage, the apartments and baths splendidly adorned with tapestries, earthenware tiles and paintings, and above all with exquisitely carved woodwork, which is still in existence. To him, too, are due all the rustic additions, the Queen's farm and dairy.

Marie-Antoinette was so attached to the Trianon that she found Rambouillet less attractive. But there was a moment when Louis XVI hoped to induce her to stay there, and it is from this period that her visit dates. With this object in view he had the little buildings at the entrance secretly erected and the interior of the dairy entirely decorated in monochrome by Joseph Sauvage, with a skilful imitation of reliefs.

The first time Marie-Antoinette ventured into this part of the

Château de Rambouillet.

park, she was unaware of the surprise which the king had so cleverly prepared for her. In order to hide it more easily, a sort of hedge of greenery had been set up in front of the buildings, where a charming episode now took place. The Queen was just advancing towards it when the hedge fell down. " In its place — as in a fairy tale — there rose in all its fresh beauty a sort of sandstone temple, a new production of the architect Thévenin, " to quote Henri Longnon.

Château de Rambouillet.
The Queen's Dairy.

The Queen next entered the dairy. She admired the charming hall, shaped like a rotunda and adorned with a marble table, and the

graceful *Amalthea*, the masterpiece of the sculptor Pierre Julien. The present so discreetly prepared by her royal lover touched the queen deeply. Alas ! that was still the age of French art with all its delicate and transient caprices, which time was to destroy. Though the graceful buildings of the dairy have remained intact, Pierre Julien's statue has been removed. As for the delightful bas-reliefs by the same artist, representing *Apollo and Admetus* and *The Education of Jupiter*, they were carried off under the Consulate, at the request of Madame Bonaparte, and went to adorn the interior of another dairy, the one set up by Josephine at La Malmaison. These precious works of the 18th century, which had been such a bone of contention, were afterwards bought up and sold in England.

Château de Rambouillet. The Lake.

In contrast with all these dainty memories of a truly feminine age, which carried its pursuit of grace and its genius for ornament so far, the mighty mass of forests of which Rambouillet is the centre stretches away indefinitely, on the one side beyond Pontchartrain, Neauphle-

le-Vieux, Neauphle-le-Château, and Montfort-l'Amaury, as far as the first fields of the Mantois; on the other side towards Dourdan and Limours, in the direction of the verdant Hurepoix, with its orchards and cornfields, which stretches in a thick, heavy carpet of emerald beyond Arpajon as far as Montlhéry. Several little rivers, among them the

Château de Rambouillet. The Dutch Lake.

Vesgre and the Drouette, swelled by the Guesle, lend fertility to this region, now gliding through the woods beneath the open sky, now flowing like prattling brooks beneath the branches.

The Vesgre in particular, to the north of the Forest of Rambouillet, flows through the large country town of Houdan, whose massive donjon and famous poultry-market it reflects in its tranquil waters. As for the Drouette, it receives the waters of the Guesle at Epernon, and then flows on to join the Eure between Maintenon and Nogent-le-Roi. Thus the life-bearing streams flow here and there, adding a harmonious murmur to the scene. But beside the living, winding streams, which flow among the cresses and water-flags, there are the stagnant waters of the ponds.

Château de Rambouillet. The Dutch Lake.

It is not for nothing that M. Pierre Lelong the chronicler of these regions, has called the Yveline " the land of blue frogs ". These blue frogs are the pretty *rainettes*, hidden among the reeds, which one hears in the day-time, and whose croaking re-echoes in the sun on the edge of peaceful natural lakes such as the pools of Guipereux, that of Angennes among the thickets of Epernon, of La Tour near Vieille-Eglise, and lastly, by those great mirror-like expanses, the pools of Hollande, or Orlande, Malmaison, Bourgneuf, Pourrat, and

Autumn. From a painting by Joseph in the Queen's Dairy.

The Forest of Rambouillet.

Saint-Hubert, descending in a series of graduated levels with sluice-gates between each, which lend such a pleasant freshness to the whole canton of Essarts-le-Roi, Auffargis or Saint-Léger-en-Yveline.

The Forest of Rambouillet is well stocked with game, haunted alike by stags and pheasants, and also commends itself by the beauty and variety of its trees. The Forest of Yveline, plant-

Gambaiseuil.

ed with birch, pine, hornbeam, and beech, carpeted with heather, and full of juniper, wildroses, and holly, is a continuation of that of Rambouillet, and is chiefly famous for its oaks, chiefly of the dense, gnarled variety known as *quercus robur*, whose proud heads and sturdy branches tower over the undergrowth, casting a mighty shade. Many of these fine

An Oak in the Forest.

trees are to be seen between Les Mesnuls, Montfort-l'Amaury and Gambaiseuil, and in *La Maison du Péché*, the scene of which is laid in this region, M^me^ Marcelle Tinayre has done well to mention the Chêne-pourpre of Rouvenoir, which is no doubt the Chêne-rogneux of Gros-Rouvre. " The church of Rouvenoir could be descried, " she says, continuing her description, " amid the swelling mass of foliage which the first approach of spring had tinged with the crimson of autumn. And beyond, bathed in the soft transparency of the air, lay the plain. "

Though it lies close up against the forest and on its very outskirts, between Les Mesnuls and Gros-Rouvre, Montfort-l'Amaury, a little city of legend, once attached to the Duchy of Brittany and a fief of Queen Anne, possesses a remarkable cloister, and presents all the appearance

Montfort-l'Amaury.

Montfort-l'Amaury. Cloisters.

of a town. The ruins of its castle are still to be seen, of which Victor Hugo commemorated the picturesque beauty in *Odes et Ballades*. But at Les Mesnuls the château is well-preserved, with an extensive façade and innumerable windows. We should also mention the Château of Pontchartrain, which can be seen considerably above Les Mesnuls, to the east, at the extreme end of the valley of Elancourt, surrounded by a park watered by the Mauldre. It is still a very fine residence; as M. Henri de Régnier says, it "dates from

a time when men excelled in building nobly. " And not only in building, but in planting and laying out pleasure-gardens. Le Nostre came here at the request of Phelypeaux, Comte de Pontchartrain, Louis XIV's Minister of State; and this is still evident from a certain simple and yet imposing grandeur produced by the arrangement of the lakes and avenues.

Château des Mesnuls.

Another splendid dwelling much admired and written about in the 18th century stands on the banks of the Juine, between Auneau and Etampes, and is at least as interesting to the tourist and historian as Pontchartrain : namely, Méréville. Thanks to Laborde, the rich financier, who enlarged the building, and in particular extended and completely transformed its grounds towards the end of the 18th century, the plantations of Méréville vied with the most noted " English parks " in France, namely those of Mortefontaine or Ermenonville. " Nowhere, " writes Madame Lebrun, " are more varied views, finer trees or more abundant vegetation to be seen; and nowhere has art lent its aid to the beauties of nature with a more discriminating taste. A profusion of buildings

Montfort-l'Amaury. The Tower.

are scattered about the grounds, but not haphazard. The rocks, which are huge, and must have cost a fortune, the cascades, temples, pavilions, everything is in its place, and combines to produce a charming impression. "

It must be admitted that Méréville does not present quite the same attractions nowadays as when this indulgent artist came there to draw and paint. Many of the light buildings and pretty structures have disappeared in course of time. But in spite of the passage of time, there still survives one literary tradition in this ancient abode, namely that of Chateaubriand, who came here to read his little romance, the *Last of the Abencerrages*, to Nathalie de Noailles and the Comte Alexandre de Laborde. However, Méréville is not the only dream-castle in the soft and smiling region enclosed by those charming rivers the Juine, Orge and Remarde — those poetical châteaux whose ancient gables, flanking pavilions and pointed towers we see silhouetted against the landscape. And we should never have finished if

Montfort-l'Amaury. Entrance to the Cemetery.

we tried to enumerate the beauties of these noble mansions, all of them distinguished by some remarkable feature, starting with the valley of the Juine; for instance, Chamarande, Gillevoisin, Menil-Voisin, which looks so stately with its wrought iron gates, its trenches, and its façade of the time of Louis XIII; next, in the two neighbouring valleys of the Orge and the Remarde, Sainte-Mesme, rising on the edge of a pool, Le Plessis-Mornay, Bâville, praised by Boileau and once the property of the advocate-general Lamoignon, and lastly Le Marais, where a charming coterie used to meet in the 19th century, in the days of the Comtesse Molé.

The Houdan Tower.

As for Grillon, near Dourdan, which was built on the banks of the Orge, at the end of two avenues, " one of hornbeams, one of willows, " nothing is left of it but a rusty iron gate thrown across a stone bridge. And yet

Château du Marais.

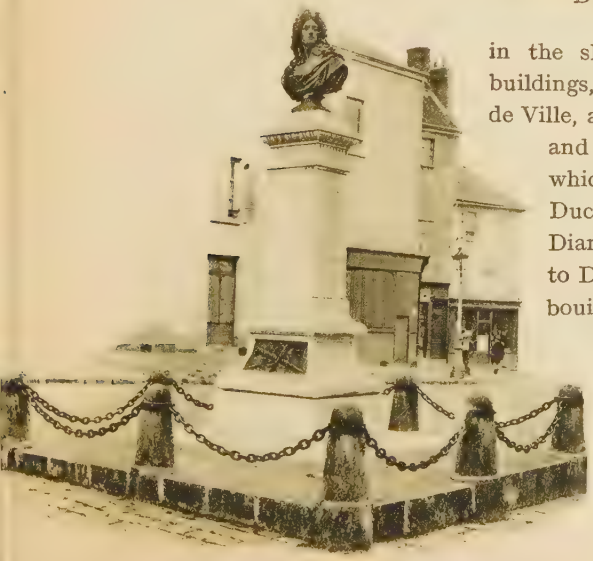
it was here, in this ruined, pillaged house, once so magnificent, that Regnard, the gay and frank, author of *La Provençale, Les Folies amoureuses* and the *Ménechmes*, passed such lovely, and at times such happy hours. Regnard's remains now lie in the church of Saint-Germain

Château de Dourdan.

at Dourdan. And Dourdan itself, with its old gates, its feudal castle, of which the towers and ramparts have been restored, its tranquil streets and inhabitants, is the very type of a large provincial market-town.

The same is true of Etampes, also in the Hurepoix, built at the confluence of the Juine, the Louette and the Chalouette, as pregnant with history as Dourdan, and whose old donjon, known as the Tour Guinette, raises its proud mass above the spires of the Churches of Notre-Dame, Saint-Basile, Saint-Gilles and Saint-Martin. The Renaissance has left its mark on Etampes

Dourdan. The Church.



in the shape of two charming little buildings, still to be seen near the Hôtel de Ville, adorned with grotesque masks, and flanked with turrets, one of which sheltered Anne de Pisseleu, Duchesse d'Etampes, and the other Diane de Poitiers. For from Anet to Dreux and from Dreux to Rambouillet, it is this graceful pagan art of the late Renaissance which sheds a radiant splendour and a noble sweetness

Statue of Regnard.

upon the private residences, the religious and civic edifices of these regions. The whole of this part of the Ile-de-France is one long triumph for Pierre Lescot, Philibert Delorme and Jean Goujon, that

Château de Bâville.

master of masters. While Limours, Arpajon, Marcoussis, and Montlhéry, large country towns surrounded by market-gardens and situated in the middle of the Hurepoix, add a more rustic touch amid the lovely forms of these statues and châteaux designed by these great artists and adorned by their skilful, sensuous chisel.

But it is not only the Graces of the Renaissance, it is also the Virgin Mother, the Virgin of the porch of Chartres, who extends her hand in kindliness, love and protection over this country with its patchwork of varied crops, its rich tapestry of fields, orchards and kitchen-gardens, known as the Hurepoix. It was she who long watched over the pilgrimages to Saint-Sulpice-de-Favières, a Gothic masterpiece between the Orge and Juine, not far from Chamarande. Under the name of Notre-Dame de Bonne-Garde we find her again at Longpont, near Montlhéry,

Etampes. Hôtel de Ville.

on the banks of the Orge. And we next come upon her under the name of Geneviève, patron-saint of Lutetia, at the entrance to the Forest of Sequigny, in a spot known as Sainte-Geneviève-des-Bois, a little chapel adorned with flowers, votive offerings and simple presents, almost

Etampes. The Church and the house of Anne de Pisseleu.

hidden underground and visited by a miraculous spring. I like to think that Charles Péguy, who never separated Geneviève, the patron

Favières. Saint-Sulpice.

saint of Paris and the Ile-de-France, from Mary, Mother of God, came here to pray as often as to Nanterre. " Everybody, from Limours to Pontoise, " writes this great poet, " knew how diligent and active was the guardian of the flocks, and how she watched over the town. And

Longpont (Aisne). The Abbey.

so it was meet that, over against the pagan Muses of Anet, Dreux and Etampes, opposite the Deserts of the Renaissance, they should have set up the image of Geneviève, and spread the skirt of her blue mantle over this spot.

A controversy took place when this statue was erected on the Pont de la Tournelle; some said the image should face the town the saint had protected, others that it should face the country towards Paris from where the saint had seen the barbarian hordes against whom she had defended that city.

Longpont (Aisne). The Abbey.

The Seine at Limay.

CHAPTER VI

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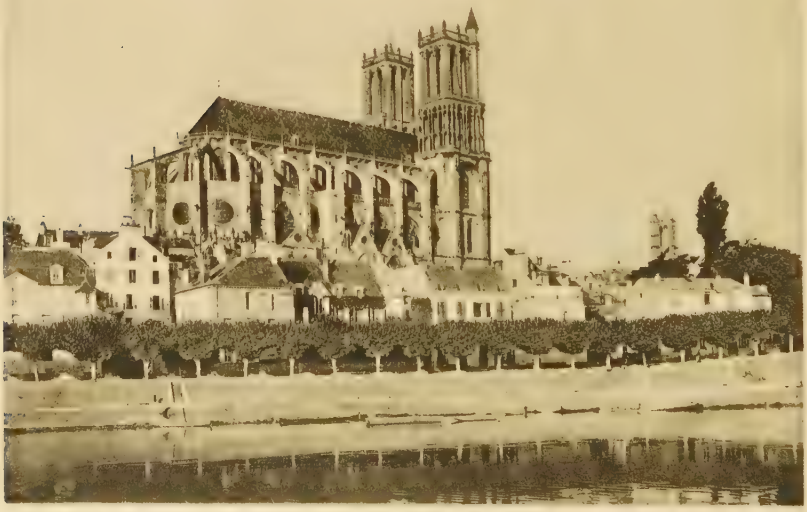
Mantes and the Mantois. The Valley of the Seine from Triel to La Roche-Guyon. The Valley of the Epte. — The Vexin.

THE general aspect of the Mantois is quite different from that of the Yveline, owing to its open horizon, the regular course of its rivers, and above all the height of its stony cliffs, especially between the Seine and the Epte. We pass from a leafy region of dense thickets and deep copses into a region of plains, which seems to spread its fields like a magnificent tapestry over a vast space at the feet of Notre-Dame of Mantes.

For some time before we approach the plateaux of the Vexin, and

traverse the region of chalk and flint, we walk on the flat in the health-giving air. Adrien Mithouard was one of those fondest of wandering about this region, advancing at a swinging stride, and afterwards recording in a beautiful page his happiness at walking " on foot in the Mantois, intoxicated with the ecstasy of the plains. " " In the Ile-de-France, " he added, " the very soil upon which one walks fills one with emotion. " It must be added that in this vast plain these walks along long, straight roads always lead to the town; and this town is Mantes, Mantes surnamed " the Pretty " *(la jolie)*, whose spires, rising above the verdant Ile des Dames, seem to command the horizon and dominate the river.

It is a fact that in the beginning, far back in the Middle Ages, the monk who watched over Limay and the great island from the Ermitage Saint-Sauveur looked out over the Seine, up stream towards Meulan, and down stream towards Bonnières. It was he who gave warning of the boats as they passed, and in case of alarm signalled to the watchman on the high Tour Saint-Maclou or in Notre-Dame. And this Mantes in the



Mantes. The Collegiate Church with Tower of Saint-Maclou.

Mantes. The Collegiate Church.

Ile-de-France was a warrior city for long ages before it became the gay and dainty town of to-day.

Mantes unit le chêne des dieux
Au lis du roi sur sa bannière.

(Mantes bears side by side upon its banner the oak of the gods and the royal lily).

So much was this the case that Philip Augustus, the victor of Bouvines, delighted to stay here, and called Mantes his " beloved city ". Later, Henri IV was equally attached to this town by the river. " Mantes was once my Paris, this castle my Louvre and this garden my Tuileries, " he wrote later to Queen Marie de' Medici. But this " once " had a note of melancholy, and these regretful words carried Henri back to the days when he used to come to Mantes to visit the fair Gabrielle, at a house which still exists in what is now the Rue Thiers.

Mantes. The Tower of Saint-Maclou.

The traces of the past, both religious and civil, to be found round Mantes make it a most interesting archaeological centre. Besides Saint-Maclou, of which only the tower is left, Notre-Dame deserves a visit. It was savagely mutilated at the time of the Revolution, but its doorways, gallery and towers belong to the best period of Gothic. Many of the chapels are very fine, especially that of Navarre, with its vault supported by a central pillar, which aroused the admiration of Viollet-le-Duc. " It is, " he said, " one of the best examples of the architecture of the early 15th century in the Ile-de-France. "

It must be added that later centuries have left the trace of their florid style and ornate art at Mantes just as much as the 14th. Thus the *Auditoire royal*, the seat of the judiciary at Mantes, bearing the shield of France quartered with that of Brittany, has a façade displaying the finest 15th century work. Not far off is to be seen a fountain designed by Nicolas Delabrosse, a local artist, a masterpiece of the Renaissance

and a flower of pierced stonework; while the façade of the Hôtel de Ville, though mutilated, can show work of the 17th century. The best examples of this mixture of styles which we can indicate are the squat Tour des Arquebusiers, or the Porte-aux-Prêtres, which we shall find on the Quai des Cordeliers, going in the direction of La Vaucouleurs. And lastly, there is the bridge; that fine, solid bridge which connects Mantes with Limay, and was rebuilt after the events of 1870 on the model of that of Perronet.

But there is yet another bridge surviving at Mantes; namely the one connecting it with the island of Limay, commanded by the tower of an old mill, which was painted by Corot in one of his most charming landscapes. We may mention that Corot, who came here several times, either to Mantes or Rosny, where he painted the Stations of the Cross in the modern church, was greatly attracted by the river banks here, as was Claude Monet. Besides his drawings and paintings, there is a note-book in existence in which this great and simple master jotted down some charming notes on the varied aspects of this part of the Mantois. It was above all the Seine, with the changing play of light upon its waters, that inspired his brush and stirred his heart; the Seine, which he never loved so much as

Mantes. The Priests' Doorway.

when it had " not a wrinkle, " as he puts it, — that is to say when it was tranquil and still and like a great mirror. And after the Seine it was the silvery, shivering delicacy of the willows which he most delighted to record in slight sketches.

Limay. The Old Bridge.

For Claude Monet, on the other hand, who planted a garden full of roses and water-lilies at Giverny, on the banks of the Seine, not far from its confluence with the Epte, it is the varied harmonies of the poplars rather than the willows which fill his landscapes. Both the landscapes of Daubigny, who came and painted where the Oise meets the Seine, and of Monet, who lived near the place where it is joined by the Epte, evidently draw the whole of their movement and life from the great river. " The Seine, perfectly navigable, fertile, abundant, gracious, healthy and inviting, without rocks or shoals; the safest river in France, " such are the simple charming words in which François de Belleforest, the old 16th century chronicler, depicts this queen of rivers. And less

The Epte at Giverny.

The Church at Giverny.

than a hundred years later, Madame de Sévigné delighted in following every winding of this river as far as Rouen, watching the games in the meadows, " the little channels diverted from it and the young willows " this same river to which Paris and the Ile-de-France owe their abundant prosperity, both on account of the traffic borne upon it and the fertility which it brings to the soil and crops. Next it was the turn of Chénier. " O thou, limpid nymph, " he wrote as he watched the Seine flowing idly past Louveciennes. And lastly Nodier, that master of

The Seine between Triel and Meulan.

the fantastic and unreal, that poet of dreams, was fascinated by this moving reality, a deep, noble and pure river with its brimming banks, of which he followed every winding, delighting his eyes with its whims and caprices, from the Côte d'Or with its laden vines to the river Epte which suddenly cuts a liquid moat, a deep channel filled with water, beyond Mantes, before Vernon, between the two Vexins, the French and the Norman. " Giverny, " writes Nodier, " is the first village which the Seine meets with on leaving the Ile-de-France. "

" Is it not pleasant, " once remarked Remy de Gourmont, in discussing the etymology of the names of rivers, " Is it not pleasant to know that the name Seine means ' the gushing ' ? " And if we think of it, the name assumes a rich significance, a wonderful aptness. Not only does the Seine itself, whose windings were followed by the happy idler, gush forth from the earth in Upper Burgundy, but from the borders of Brie to those of Normandy, as well as on every hill-side and all along its banks, does it not cause pleasant cities to spring up, not to speak of agreeable country towns, and, lastly, those fresh, pretty villages which raise towards the cloudy, delicate sky their graceful towers crowned

with mossy tiles or grey slate, and bearing a weathercock, who is a true Gallic cock of the Ile-de-France.

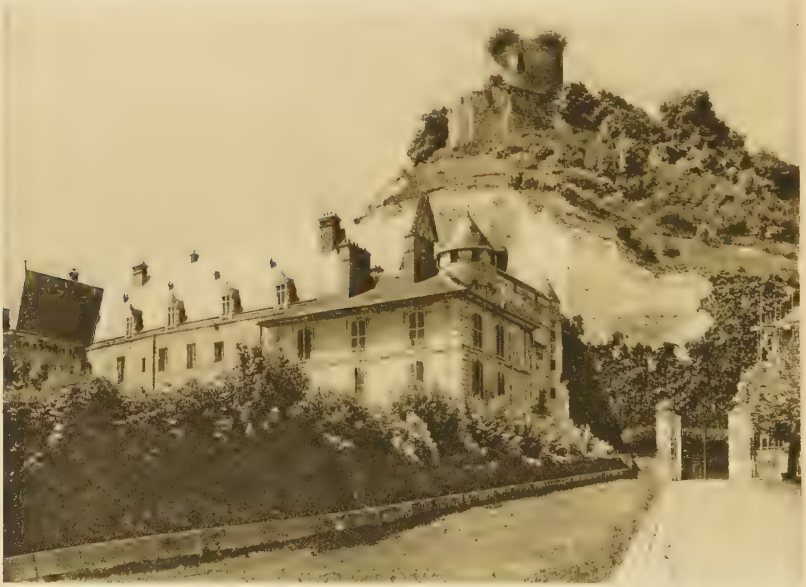
First, beyond Poissy, we see Villennes on the left bank and Triel on the right, both situated on a hill side above the Seine. To go from one to the other of these attractive looking villages, one crosses the bridge at Médan and Verneuil; but one cannot wander along these hedges and among the orchards without calling up many a memory and evoking many a Muse. It is amusing to think that a few steps from Médan, the stronghold of naturalism, inhabited by Emile Zola, we may still, when the banks at twilight are shrouded in a soft mist, and the nightingale prepares to warble his hymn of love, meet at times the gentle shades of Ronsard's friends, the members of the Pléiade. So at least relates the excellent Belon, a 16th century writer, in his curious *Histoire de la nature des oiseaux*. " In summer time, " he says, " many poets of our nation, having met together by the kindness of M. J. Brinon, a king's counsellor, near Poissy on the river Seine, accompanied him to visit Médan and Villaines. The same, having made his best endeavour to receive them with elegance *(humainement)*, entertained them as was

Sunday at Poissy.

fitting — " that is to say, he hastened to divert them not only with feasts and collations, but with fishing on the shores of the islands, hunting little birds, gathering fruit, and lastly, by a concert and ball " beside the fountains and for the nymphs. "

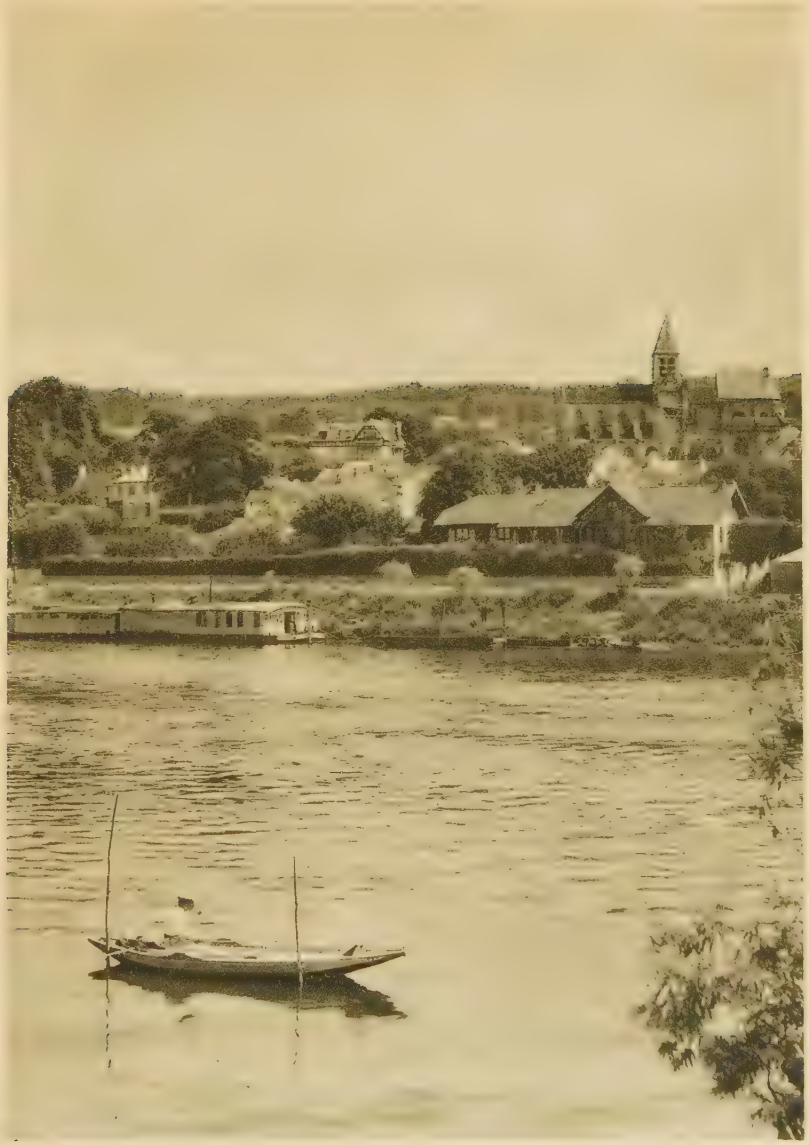
The place, as we can see, was meet for every kind of pleasure, and so it remained. In the following century, when the gay Regnard, on his way to Mantes and Vernon, appeared at Triel " seated around a leg of mutton, " he carried on this tradition of good humour and good cheer. And lastly, who is to say that that fine passage in the *Contemplations :*

Nous allons au verger cueillir des bigarreaux
(We are going to the orchard to gather bigaroon cherries)



Château de La Roche-Guyon.

which was inspired by the verdant landscape of Triel, was not composed by Victor Hugo in view of the very same scenes where Ronsard himself and his friends walked about all crowned with flowers as they sang and conversed.



Triel.

After a moment's quiet contemplation in the Gothic nave of the little church of Triel, we may take the road which passes through the very church itself, and proceed to make some easy walks in the neighbourhood, either to Pissefontaine, Chanteloup, where lived Mlle Clairon, or a little further, to Cheverchement. From this peaceful hamlet, where the obscure and tortuous Octave Mirbeau came to end his days, rise the wooded heights of L'Hautie, on the way to Meulan. From these heights scored with quarries, the view is most extensive, embracing Epone in the south, Aubergenville, Maule and all the windings of the Mauldre; and on the north looking towards " the valley of the Aubette and the charming hillsides of the French Vexin ". (André Hallays.)

Triel. The Church.

These hills, as their slopes break into little vineyards, lead us gradually to that part of Meulan which lies highest above the river. A

The Seine from La Roche-Guyon.

shady park, the fragmentary remains of the old castle, and the church of Saint-Nicolas, are not the only objects of interest in this place; there is also the *Maisonnette*, where Sophie Grouchy, the wife and afterwards the widow of Condorcet, retired under the Consulate with Fauriel the historian. Later on, Guizot and his young wife, the charming Pauline de Meulan, inhabited the same solitudes, which Guizot dearly loved. "The Maisonnette," he writes, "was situated half-way up the hill, with a view over the little town of Meulan with its two churches. To the right of the town the eye was met by the Ile Belle, covered with green meadows and surrounded by great poplars; opposite by the old bridge of Meulan, and, beyond the bridge, by the wide, fertile valley of the Seine."

It must be admitted that between Meulan, Breuil-en-Vexin and

La Roche-Guyon. The Valley of the Seine. Up stream.

Mantes this valley describes a noble curve; but it is almost straight, slow and even lazy in its windings compared with another bend, deeper than the broad stream, which suddenly takes as it were a bite into the heart of the Vexin, winding and unwinding itself in a bold loop between Giverny and Mantes.

At the end of this loop, between Vetheuil and Haute-Isle, lies the forest of Moisson, with its leafy plantations. But this typical forest of the Seine with its poplars is not the only one which adds a woodland touch of intense green to the region lying along this part of the river. There is also the forest of Rosny. And on the edge of this forest, which covers part of the adjacent region of Madrie, on the banks of the Seine, lies the historic château where Maximilian de Béthune, Baron de Rosny and Duc de Sully, the wise counsellor of Henri IV, retired after the assassination of his friend and sovereign. Round this château can nowadays be seen a park full of dense and sombre foliage, which Olivier de Serres is said to have planned. In the same valley, though on the opposite

La Roche-Guyon. The Valley of the Seine. Down stream.

bank, is a curious castle built on the mountain-side at several different periods, whose mediaeval donjon towers above the main structure, which was almost entirely rebuilt at the Renaissance and during the 17th century; namely, that of La Roche-Guyon.

" I do not know, " writes M. André Hallays, " that there is another castle in the whole of France so rich in memories and history. " Without going back to the age of the Counts Guyon, the first to built upon this rock in the middle ages, we may say that this residence witnessed two periods of splendour. The first goes back to the 17th century, when this seigniorial domain was raised to the rank of a duchy and peerage of France in favour of François de la Rochefoucauld, Prince de Marsillac. There is even a tradition according to which Madame de La Fayette's illustrious friend gave the last touches to his *Maximes* in a room in the castle which is still to be seen, looking over the park towards a mass of acacias and chestnut trees. Some fine tapestries representing scenes from the Story of Esther, a number of portraits signed by Nattier, especially

Vétheuil. The Church.

that of the lovely Marquise d'Enville, one of the most subtle intelligences of the 18th century, a friend of Mlle de Lespinasse and a correspondent of Voltaire and Horace Walpole, still bear witness to the treasures contained in this house before the Revolution. But the period of the Restoration has also left a world of memories at La Roche-Guyon.

At that time the young Duc de Rohan, having become the owner of the Château, delighted to gather round him in this rustic spot the budding glories of romanticism; and since the young duke had entered the priesthood after the tragic death of his wife, who was burnt alive at a ball, it sometimes happened that he said mass in person for his guests in a chapel which is still to be seen hollowed out in the rock; though it is now so filled with briars, that one can only make one's way into it with difficulty. Lamartine was once present at one of these ser-

vices; and thus one of this great poet's noblest *Meditations*, called *Holy Week at La Roche-Guyon*, was inspired by this scene laid in a setting worthy of it.

After admiring an ancient fountain adorned with flowers, and spending a moment in the church, we may take the ferry connecting the village with the other bank of the Seine, and follow the edge of the Forest of Moisson as far as Lavacourt. At Lavacourt we may take another boat which will land us at Vetheuil, where those interested in the beauty of the ancient stones of France will find a church worthy of especial attention on account of the dainty Renaissance work on the main façade, besides the retable, chapels and statues in the interior, which are very delicate and highly wrought specimens of this style.

Between Vetheuil and La Roche-Guyon soon appears another church, or rather chapel, built in the living rock, the rustic tower of which appears on top of the hill on a level with the ground, among the flowers. It is the chapel of Haute-Isle. One can still see on a wall half destroyed by damp an inscription which is somewhat hard to decipher,

At Haute-Isle.

Gisors. Church of Saint-Gervais.

but informs us that Nicolas Dongois of Paris and Françoise le Marchand his wife " by ordinance of the Parlement dated August 28, 1670, have caused this church to be built, with its sacristy, retable, choir and bells, its necessary ornaments, presbytery and priest's garden. " If we recall that Nicolas Dongois was own nephew to Boileau — " my nephew, the illustrious M. Dongois ! " as Despréaux calls him in his epistle to Lamoignon — we shall realise the full interest of this troglodyte's chapel, often visited by the author of the *Lutrin*, and where he perhaps knelt and prayed.

Passing through La Roche-Guyon once again, we may easily follow the road from Haute-Isle, climb the slope, and, a little out of breath, reach the cross-roads where the view over Clachaloze embraces not only the Seine and the Forests of Rosny and Moisson, but also, as far as the eye can reach, the boundless horizon of the Mantois. From here we can reach Gasny, and next the Epte with its green waters will appear beneath the poplars whose foliage is reflected in them; and it will be our joy to follow its capricious windings. All along its banks runs an unending

Gisors. Church of Saint-Gervais.

Gisors. The Tower.

Gisors. North door of Saint-Gervais.

succession of thatched roofs, busy mills and washing places ringing with the noise of the washerwomen beating linen; at last villages begin to appear here and there among the alders, hidden by groups of trees. The most charming of them all is flower-girt Saint-Clair, amidst its green meadows overhanging the shore of the Epte, where the inhabitants still keep up old and time-honoured customs, particularly that of St. John's fires. We also come to a very pretty little town : namely, Gisors.

At Gisors, after taking a walk through the old streets, and visiting

the monuments of the past — particularly an old Carmelite convent which has been turned into the Hôtel de Ville, and the church, several

Gisors. Hôtel de Ville.

parts of which, especially the north entrance, are most remarkable, one should ascend to the ruined castle and visit the tower, in which a mysterious and clever prisoner was confined for a long time. By using the point of a nail and following the pale ray of light which reached him through a loop-hole, the captive succeeding in scratching in the stone various incidents of the Passion, which have a certain artistic merit. Tradition has it that as soon as the nail was worn out the prisoner died.

But an equally massive tower can be seen at Trie-Château, a regular donjon with a turreted roof, which flanks the pleasure-house built on the site of the former residence of the Princes of Conti, on the side looking towards the village. The most famous inhabitant of this donjon, who was also a prisoner, since he was in hiding here, was Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He had taken refuge here with Thérèse Levasseur, and is said to have spent his time in this tower finishing his *Confessions*. His

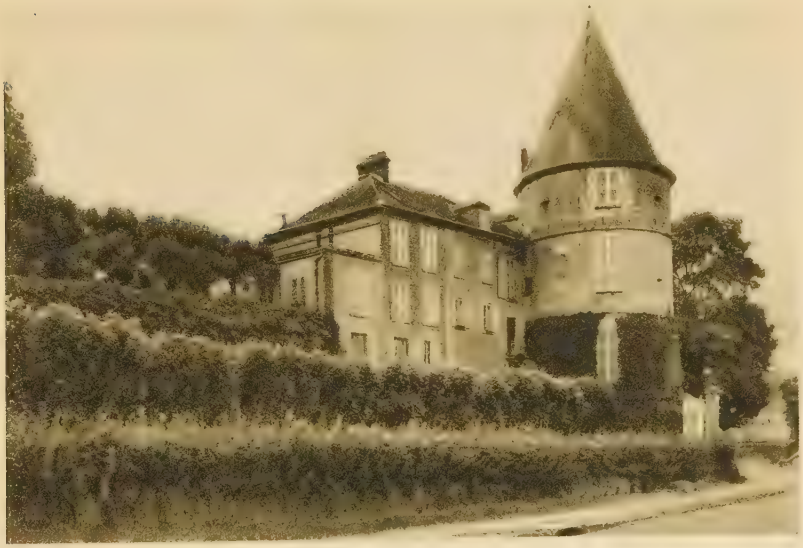
Chaumont-en-Vexin. The Renaissance Tower of the Church.

come to Chaumont-en-Vexin on the Troesne, and Magny-en-Vexin on the Aubette — another tributary of the Epte — and lastly, the big country town of Marines, which recalls the noble yet rustic past of these rich lands, scored across with valleys, through which it is so pleasant to wander during a fine summer, now following the brook of Méru, the banks of the Sausseron or the Viosne, tributaries of the Oise, now going

sole recreation, when he thought he could escape observation, was to visit the Forest of Thelle, a little beyond Trie, for the purpose of botanising. Such an amusement was indeed worthy of a man who has written so much about nature, and may have hoped, as he wandered along the cool valleys of the Troesne and the Reveillon, to recover a little of the rustic tranquillity and soothing charm which he had recently enjoyed at Montmorency.

After Trie-Château and Trie-la-Ville, we

Gasny. The Church (1480).



Trie-Château. The Tower and Château.

upstream along the banks of the Thérain as far as the boundaries of Picardy. Beyond them begins another valley : that of the Bresche, near Clermont. Besides fine views, nooks full of winding paths, and cool water-courses, this region also contains a few famous little towns and houses, especially Liancourt. Here, beneath the shades of a park which has now been dismembered, the poet Théophile de Viau used perhaps to walk, attempting, no doubt, by his gentle elegies to draw the lovely Madame de Liancourt's faithless husband, that utter libertine,

Trie-Château. Romanesque Window of the Church.

closer to her. But we can also catch the tones of this rustic flute, the reed-pipe with whose memories the shepherdesses' poet still makes the woods resound — we can hear the same voice, the same accents echoing beyond these regions, in the direction of a hunting-box near Chantilly — known as the *Maison de Sylvie* — where Charlotte de Montmorency one day offered shelter to Théophile. Thus, where the hill-sides of the Vexin slope downwards to the plain with their gently-swelling meadows, we begin to catch sight of the soft, delicate region of the Valois; but between the two there lies the Oise.

Trie-Château. The Gateway.

Forest of Compiègne. The Lake of Saint-Pierre.

CHAPTER VII

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The Valley of the Oise : from Compiègne to Pontoise. The Valois : Senlis. — Feudal Castles : Pierrefonds. Pleasures-houses : Chantilly.

The Seine is a mighty, tranquil river which may be compared in its Olympian calm to Ceres, goddess of the corn-sheaves and the harvest; the Epte is a charming nymph, with a touch of the laundry-maid, which loves to dance and prattle between its banks; but the Oise is a woodland nymph, a dryad sporting among the vines. From Noyon to Valmondois and Mériel it forms one long mirror, over which droop the high oaks of the Forest of Ourscamp, the beeches of the Forest of Laigue, the masses of hornbeam, beech and oak which constitute the Forests of Compiègne, Halatte, and Le Lys respectively, and lastly, the Forests of Carnelle and of L'Isle-Adam.

Compiègne. In the Park.

No region could be more leafy or more densely wooded, with a more deeply-massed growth, crossed in every direction by fine roads, and with lovely rivers like the Authonne, the Nonette, the Launette, and lastly the Thève and the Isieux, flowing within sight of yet more forests, equally extensive and dense, those of Villers-Cotterets, Ermenonville, Chantilly, Orry and Coye. Woods and yet more woods : such is the lovely Valois, blooming with legends, adorned with châteaux and watered by springs. And we can well understand why Gérard de Nerval, the exquisite poet of this ancient land, fragrant with thyme and heather, laid the scene of his charming tale of the giant Tord-Chêne in the midst of such glades, and in the shadow of such trees as these. " *La belle était assise — près du ruisseau coulant. — Et dans l'eau qui frétille — baignait ses beaux pieds blancs.* " (The lovely lady was seated beside the flowing brook, bathing her beautiful white feet in the dancing water). Partly due to him too is that sweet and plaintive song whose words he took down while paying his court to Sylvie on the day of the archery contest, when the archers of Loisy won back the bouquet from those of Senlis.

Compiègne. Hôtel de Ville.

It was as a dryad, but also as a water-nymph, a young girl with delicate features and a crown of cornflowers, that Gérard de Nerval imagined the Oise. " The Oise with its heart of blue, " says Madame de Noailles; and yet another poet must be heard on the subject of this river : namely that charming dreamer from the neighbouring island, Robert Louis Stevenson, who loved it best, and was so well fitted to love it. This adventurous traveller and fastidious man of letters, who, like Gauguin, was to depart and end his days in the South Sea Islands, was sure to speak in sweet accents of this nymph of France, this clear river. In a collection of his early impressions entitled *An Inland Voyage* we may linger over Stevenson's description of the meeting of the two great rivers, the Aisne and the Oise, a

Compiègne. The Church of Saint-Jacques.

Compiègne. Façade of the Château.

little way above Compiègne. " Here ", he says poetically, " ended the adolescence of the Oise, this was his marriage day. " It was no longer adolescent, it had already become a sort of great waterway, with a hurrying, rather rapid course, and in order to mark its importance, and show that it was promoted to the rank of a real river, this moving road, on leaving the borders of the Noyonnais, made its first acquaintance with a great city.

Compiègne. Façade overlooking the Park.

On arriving at this city — namely Compiègne — there was one

Rethondes. The Cross-roads.

thing which Stevenson noticed at once : the Hôtel de Ville. " I doted upon the town-hall. It is, " he says, " a monument of Gothic insecurity, all turretted and gargoyled, and slashed and bedizened with half a score of architectural fancies, " amidst which, in a stone niche, between florid windows, and below the most elegant tower, sits " the good King Louis XII, " the father of his people, for ever astride upon his horse. Built in the transition style

Rethondes. The Coach-house.

between the Gothic and the Renaissance, this gem of the flamboyant order is set as it were like a rare and perfect diadem upon the brow of Compiègne.

But the château close at hand, built in the days of Louis XV by

The Church of Saint-Leu-d'Esserent.

Jacques-Ange Gabriel, to whom we owe the Petit Trianon, has also an atmosphere of great glory and rare beauty. Gérard de Nerval, to whom we shall constantly have to refer, like Stevenson, every time we touch the banks of the Oise, writes that at this supreme point where " the Ile-de-France, the Valois and Picardy meet, one may indulge in dreams of the loveliest rustic scenes in the world. " But what rustic fêtes ever equalled those whose splendour was witnessed by these panelled walls, on May 16, 1770, when the religious ceremony of marriage was celebrated in the very chapel of the Château between the Dauphin, Louis XV's grandson, and Marie-Antoinette ? To find a splendour comparable to this, though lacking its restrained and graceful charm, we shall have to wait till the time of Napoleon and Marie-Louise.

In the park close by, when we go and admire the splendid vista

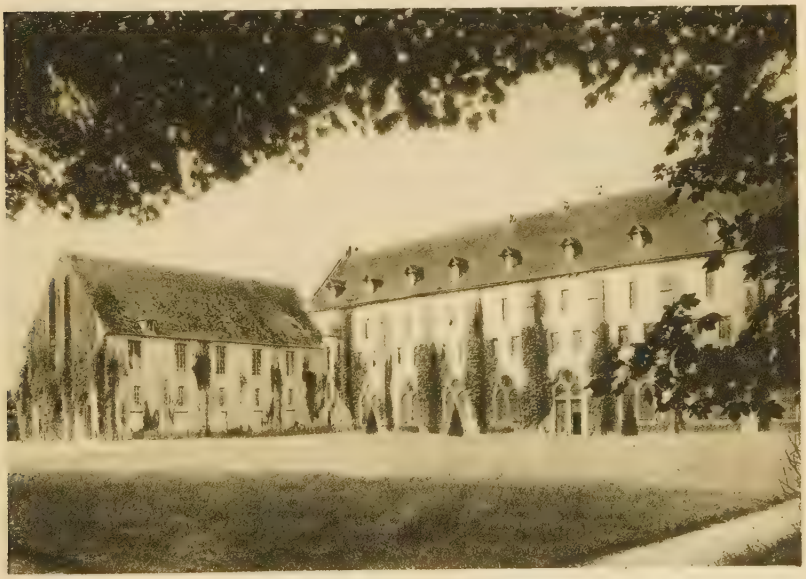
leading to the Beaux-Monts, the vast avenue opened up by order of the Emperor and looking on to the forest, we may pause by the stone seat known as Napoleon's Bench. We may also enter the *Berceau de fer*, that long trellised walk overgrown with plants, which the master of the destiny of Europe had erected in this spot to remind the new Empress of a trellis under which she had been fond of sitting as a child at Schönbrunn. But as we stroll slowly through old Compiègne, especially towards the church of Saint-Jacques (where Jeanne d'Arc came to pray before she was taken prisoner) and beyond that, far into the depths of the great woods, to the crossroads of Rethondes, these memories, and the still more glittering days of the Second Empire — the vision of the Empress Eugénie, radiant in her youth and beauty, as if in a picture by Winterhalter — must all give

Royaumont. Interior of the Abbey.

Saint-Leu-d'Esserent. Windows.

way before graver anxieties, and more recent and insistent memories.

It was here, in fact, in the middle of a clearing, that a sign-post has been erected, crowned with a star *(étoile routière)* to mark the spot where, in the midst of a peace and silence which add an impressive



Royaumont. The Abbey.

grandeur to this now historic spot, Marshal Foch, Commander-in-chief of the Allied Forces, received the German plenipotentiaries on November 11, 1918 and imposed upon them the armistice which ended the most savage and longest of wars. We may add that Compiègne had been threatened by it, and that the enemy bombardment damaged the town and place several times.

The effects of the war were also felt, for instance at Pont-Sainte-Maxence, where, as early as September 1914, it had been necessary to blow up Perronet's old bridge in order to check the advance of von Klück's army. The rushing waters of the Oise had passed beneath this bridge and been dashed back from its banks since the days of Louis XVI.

Auvers-sur-Oise.

But if Stevenson is to be believed, the river had lost its rustic character for a long time past, even before reaching this city. But it still retains its woodland nature, and its current has become stronger, while its course, through ampler, now seems slower, and after the Bresche has joined it upon the right, it enters Creil quite tamely.

Saint-Ouen-l'Aumône.
Romanesque Church.

We should note that the approach to this once attractive and pleasing city was not always made ugly and smoky by industrial surroundings. " Creil, " wrote Victor Hugo, not a century ago, " is a pretty town with fine old buildings a bridge with an island cutting it

Cloisters of Royaumont.

in half, and waters in which all of these are reflected. " And these limpid and transparent waters, the waters of the river with the " blue heart ", still reflect in their depths the imposing Romanesque church of Saint-

Pontoise. Saint-Maclou.

Leu d'Esserent, with its three towers, which commands the countryside. Beyond it are Précy and Boran. When Stevenson had paddled his way

as far as Précy it was towards sunset. The plain, he said, " is rich with tufts of poplar. In a wide, luminous curve, the Oise lay under the hill side. A faint mist began to rise and confound the different distances together ".

As we read these lines, might we not be witnessing, as it were, a transmutation into literature of one of those landscapes, with their soft, fresh tones, which Daubigny loved to paint here, or a little further on, at Auvers, from a boat moored in the middle of the river ? A little beyond this

Pontoise. The Calvet Museum (formerly Hôtel d'Estouteville).

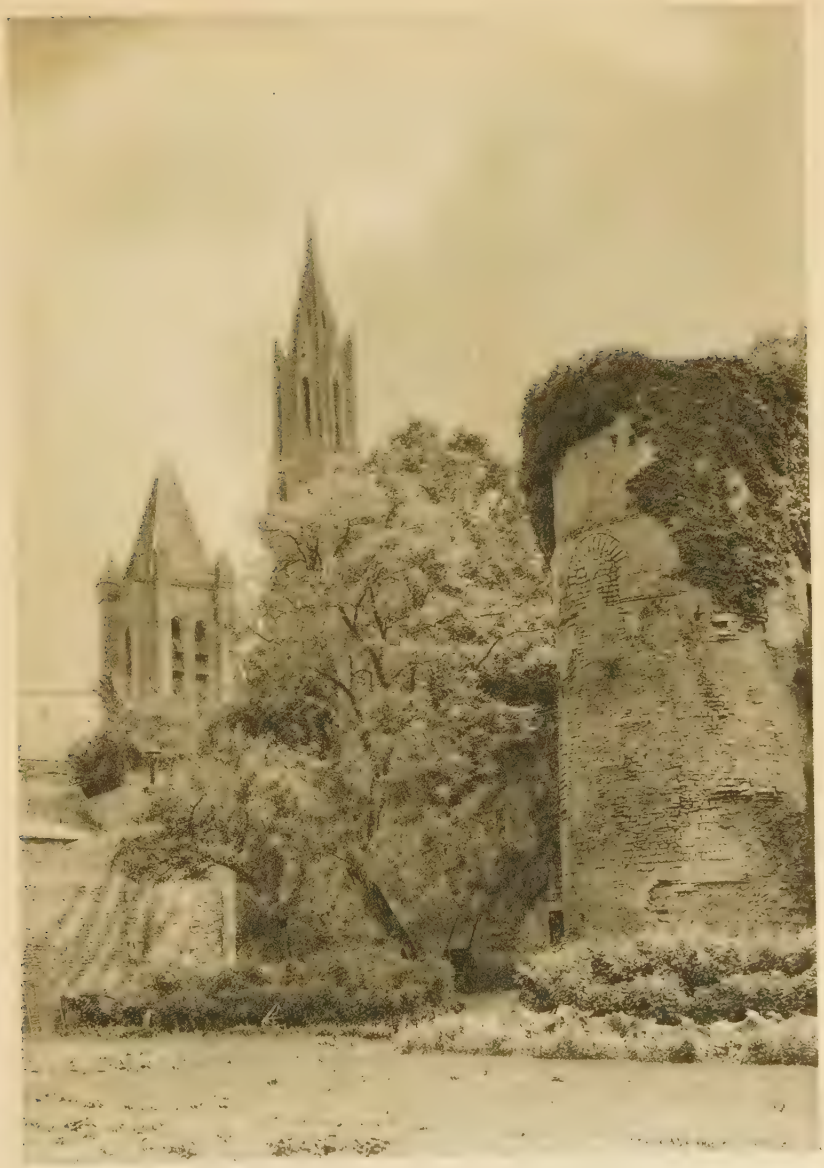
A Tomb in Saint-Maclou.

the Oise receives the waters of the Thève, swelled by those of the Isieux; and here is a region inviting to reverie and discoveries which, if we had the time, we might explore. First Royaumont, with its old Cistercian abbey,

Conflans-Sainte-Honorine.

famous in the days of St. Louis, which has preserved, among other marvels, a refectory and cloister; these, with the refectory, chapel and vast Gothic dormitory of the abbey of Le Val (a little way off, near Mériel) are reckoned as specimens of primitive French Gothic in its most graceful period. Next we come to some pleasant places which form a girdle of villages round the outskirts of the Forest of Carnelle : Asnières-sur-Oise, Viarmes, Saint-Martin-du-Tertre, Franconville with its château and gardens; then Presles, and beyond that Luzarches, where the Church of Saint-Damien has some remarkable Romanesque features. Not far from here is the cool

Pontoise. Ruins of the Château.



Senlis. The Cathedral and the Château.

Senlis Cathedral. Doorway of the Virgin.

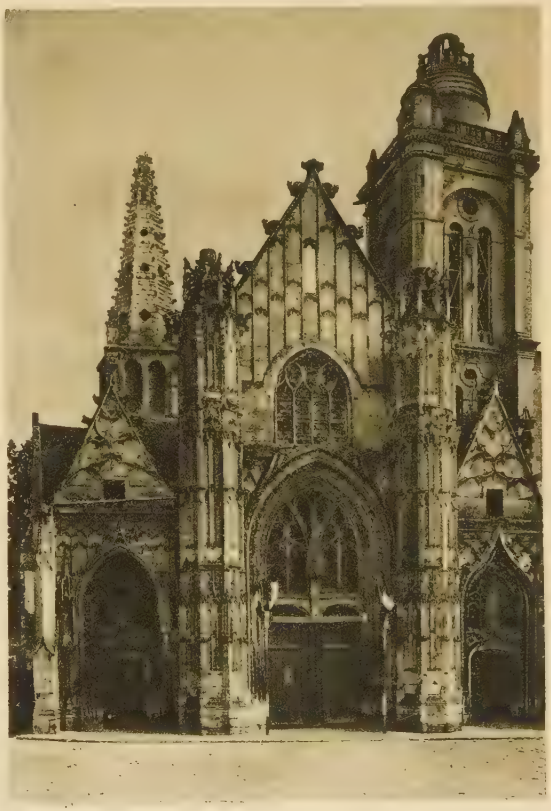
here to visit the Princes of Conti (whose château has since been destroyed), and in one of his little occasional poems he speaks of the " god of the Oise " of whom he caught a glimpse on these shores. A pleasing mythological fiction, which Jules Dupré, the tree-lover, whose memory has remained as fresh in these parts as that of Daumier at Valmondois or Daubigny at Auvers, no doubt loved to recall as he painted the autumn on this very spot with a brush dipped in ruddy gold. But we shall never come to the retreat of Hérivaux, an old estate with an ancient abbey, where Madame de Staël and Benjamin Constant loved to retire at one time; the same is true of Champlâtreux, an ancient estate of the Molé family, which, like Mortefontaine, is one of the finest survivals of the richly planned and curiously adorned residences of the 18th century.

Beyond this, as we return westwards to the valley of the Oise, appears the Forest of L'Isle-Adam, and then the pretty little town of the same name, embowered in vivid green. La Fontaine used to come

Senlis Cathedral. Sculpture on the Doorway.

end of our list of painters and poets if we accompany this hospitable river as far as Andrésy and Conflans, where it joins the Seine.

A smaller valley, but rich in views of the most graceful kind, is that of the Viosne, just outside Pontoise. Pissarro, who knew every nook and corner of it, explored it more than once with brush and canvas. But long before his day Gérard de Nerval had been here; he had climbed the hillside opposite Saint-Ouen-l'Aumône, entered the little town of Pontoise, and wandered from end to end of it, from the Place du Martroy to the peaceful municipal garden, and from the Hôtel d'Estouteville, an elegant building of the 15th century (now the Musée Calvet) to the fine church of Saint-Maclou, which contains a touchingly expressive Entombment. It is, as he charmingly puts it, " one of those towns built on a high place which please me by their patriarchal aspect, their walks, their views, and the preservation of certain customs which one does not meet with elsewhere. Here there



Senlis. Church of Saint-Pierre.

is still playing and singing in the evenings at the doors of the houses; it is amusing to wander up and down the flights of steps which form the streets; the promenade, laid out on the ancient towers, overlooks the splendid valley of the Oise. Pretty women and beautiful children are walking up and down on it ".

Senlis. The Cathedral.

Charming Gérard, happy Nerval, the friend of Sylvie, Aurélie and the Cydalises. Wherever he went he saw beauty; beneath a fragrant curtain of wistaria, even on the most time-worn walls of houses, he would discover the wondering face of love. " At Senlis, " he used to say, " there is not a single ugly girl. " He might have added that there is not a stone in that town which is not worthy of honour. " The houses are not of plaster but of stone, a hard and durable stone, " to quote Jean de Jeandun, the old and copious chronicler. And the same good Jean of Jeandun has described Senlis in his racy style as situated on the banks of the Nonette,

" amid tall trees so sparsely scattered that it is possible to see the sky, and surrounded by orchards laden with fruit and meadows starred with flowers. "

It was this durable stone remarkable for its fineness, in which master-masons and carvers of images depicted in relief the incidents of the Passion, that helped to build the splendid portal consecrated to the Virgin at Senlis, of which it may be said that, thanks to its perfect proportions and finished detail, it served as a model for those other masterpieces of the statuary art and religious architecture of northern France : the doorways of the cathedrals of Chartres, Reims, Amiens and Notre-Dame de Paris. It was also this white, easily worked, soft, yet durable stone that made it possible to raise on top of Notre-Dame de Senlis that pointed, lofty spire which soars over three forests, and of which the daring grace and subtle, slender perfection bear witness

Vez. The Tower.

that it was really here, in the Valois, that Gothic art began to glow and shed a radiance greater than all others.

A writer who felt this and expressed it with the most persuasive conviction was Ernest Renan. According to him, it was " neither in

Morienval.

Normandy, Lorraine nor Flanders, where Gothic was introduced at a comparatively late date. It was in the Ile-de-France and the surrounding region, the Valois, the Vexin, the Beauvaisis and the whole basin of the Oise — in the real France, in fact. " The inspired " masons, " the great builders who carried out the wonderful religious edifices of the middle ages, Robert de Luzarches, Pierre de Montereau, Raoul de Coucy, Jean de Chelles, all belong to the " school of the royal domain. ", defined by Viollet-le-Duc. And for him the " royal domain " is the region whose monuments one may explore, whose churches one may examine from Senlis to Noyon, from the arcades of the church of La Victoire (near Senlis) to those of the Abbey of Châalis. As we can see at Morienval, the Romanesque arch is everywhere beginning to give way to the Go-

thic arch; but the triumph of the ogive is established beyond question, and reaches its full perfection and grandeur, in the rich adornment of the great cathedral of the Valois, a shrine as ornate and magnificent as a piece of jeweller's work.

Morienval. The Church.

At twilight, when the soaring spire of Notre-Dame of Senlis points heavenward above Saint-Frambourg, Saint-Rieul and Saint-Martin, the dismantled walls of the amphitheatre, and the silent, dreaming streets, then "Senlis of the turtle-doves, winged Senlis, Senlis of the roses," as Paul Fort calls it, is revealed, so to speak, as a

Château of Ferté-Milon.

Château de Pierrefonds.

mystic, sublimated personification of the old royal Valois, where, to quote the friend of the archers, the lover of Sylvie, the confidant of the Sylvanectes, the old Sylvain of this leafy land, " the heart of France beat for more than a thousand years. "

But this little France to the north of Paris, this France of crosses and altars, this heart of France where Jeanne d'Arc came and fought, possesses yet another glory : that of its châteaux and royal residences, either warlike and feudal as at Vez, Pierrefonds, or Coucy, or smiling, ornate and exquisite in every detail, as at Raray, Villers-Cotterets, Betz or Chantilly. Coucy has been roughly treated by the war, and nothing is left of it but ruins. The remains of La Ferté-Milon (Racine's native place) are still beautiful; and so is the donjon of Vez rising above the green valley of the Authonne; nor are the Tower of Montepilloy or the ramparts of Crépy-en-Valois lacking in form or effectiveness. But it is above all at Pierrefonds that the extraordinary plan of defence, the admirable system of military protection, devised and in part carried out by Louis d'Orléans in the north of the Valois,

Château de Pierrefonds.

appears in all its grandeur, and displays its rude and massive power.

This fortress was reduced to ruins in the days of Louis XIII, but rebuilt according to the original plan in the reign of Napoleon III by the skilful and learned Viollet-le-Duc. It is only a reconstitution, but so perfectly planned and carried out, that it none the less adds to the landscape on the outskirts of the Forest of Compiègne an unexpectedly warlike touch, two or three leagues to the north and west of Villers-Cotterets — in contrast with the fine pleasure-house, now transformed into an almshouse, which Francis I, the royal builder of Chambord, Fontainebleau, and so many other palaces, had built at Villers, not far from the valley of the Authonne, in the heart of the Forest of Retz.

This dowager among forests, now known as the Forest of Villers-Cotterets, still surrounds with its coverts and foliage this abode of kings, with its fabulous wealth, at which Philibert Delorme worked, and which even nowadays still bears the mark of the artists of the Renaissance in many parts. But in all this part of the Valois there appear still more dwellings well worthy of the refined century which

gave them birth. First, to the west of the great forest mass of Halatte, a little above Senlis, there is Raray, the buildings of which, lying at the approach to the part of the forest richest in game, constitute a sort of imposing hunting-box. Thanks to the happy accident of family alliances, this residence owes its wealth of internal decoration to the pictures painted for Madame Geoffrin by Hubert-Robert and transported here, representing amusing and lively scenes in the life of that excellent grandmother.

At the château of Betz, in the little valley of the Grivelle, a tributary of the Ourcq, where the beautiful Princess of Monaco continued to live as in the pleasure-loving days of old, the arts also lend their aid in the adornment of the house. The same is true of Ermenonville, where the residence of the Marquis de Girardin, the friend and patron of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, has passed into the possession of Prince Radziwill. The wonderful panelling, old furniture and spacious salons still preserve some of the splendour of the past. But in the ancient park of Ermenonville even this splendour must fall into the background before the haunting memory of the man who on July 12, 1778, ended his hard and tormented life in this little village in circumstances which are still wrapped in mystery.

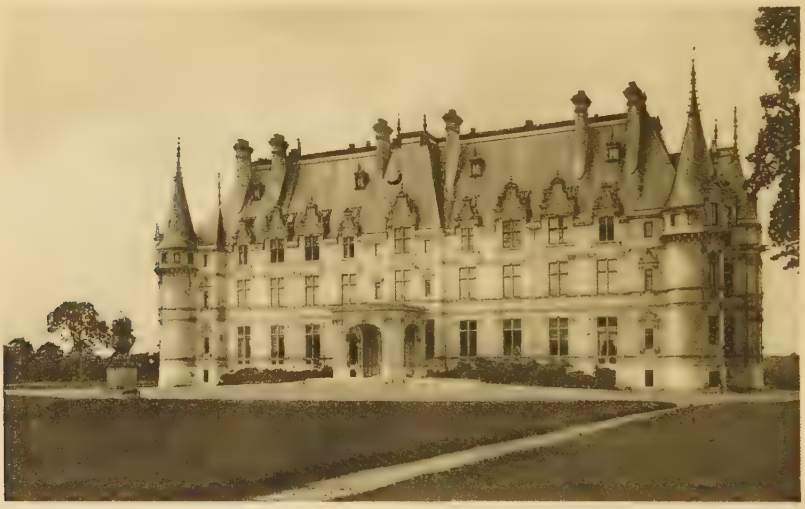
During the latter days of Louis XVI's reign the little Isle of the Poplars, where the author of the *Contrat social*, the *Nouvelle Héloïse*

The Sands at Ermenonville.

Ermenonville. The Tomb of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

and the *Confessions* was buried, became a centre which attracted many fervent pilgrims. But the National Convention deprived Ermenonville of these precious remains, and ordered them to be removed to the Pantheon. Since then his tomb, surrounded by rustling trees and bathed by the waters of the Launette, has remained empty, but it seems pervaded by the eternal memory of the prophet of nature and truth. In spite of everything, the memory of Jean-Jacques lingers on, and clings about the lordly Valois; and while Nerval gathered his strawberries and wild flowers with Sylvie, he loved to follow its traces in this very region, extending as far as Mortefontaine.

Mortefontaine! The very name is full of magic and charm. After that of Ermenonville, perhaps no other is sweeter to pronounce. Before the waters of the Thève reach the Château de la Reine Blanche, beyond Pontarme, they form the two long ponds, the Etang de Vallière and the Etang de l'Epine. The Ile Moleton is at the end of the Lac de l'Epine. In the days of Pelletier de Mortefontaine, that is to say, about the time when Madame Vigée Le Brun was taking part in all the pleasure excur-



Château of Mortefontaine.

sions arranged in this region by the Comte de Vaudreuil, the Chevalier de Coigny, and Hubert-Robert, this solitude, to quote the author of the *Souvenirs*, was already peopled by " charming islands. " With the lapse of time, the somewhat artificial treatment in the English style of these natural beauties has acquired an old-world charm, which cannot fail even nowadays to recall those years of beauty and call up the great shades of the past.

Mortefontaine. Church of Plailly.

Indeed, in this canton it was not only Gérard who loved to follow the flight of the dragon-flies along the Thève " across the meadows thick with buttercups and daisies "; but Chateaubriand

came more than once to this spot to dream. " Like migrant birds, " he wrote, " I am seized in the month of October with a restlessness which would force me to seek other climates if I also possessed the power of wings and the lightness of the hours. To beguile this instinct

Sunset at Chantilly.

I hurried to Chantilly... A few crows flews before me above the bushes of broom, the thickets and glades, and guided me to the lakes of Commelles. "

The only worthy way to approach Chantilly, with its sumptuous palace, its gardens designed by Le Nostre, its Vertugadin, its Grand Canal, its Maison de Sylvie, and its Hamlet, is to do so, like Chateaubriand, from the direction of the forest. Space will not allow us to recall all the details of the imposing past of this splendid palace. All that we can attempt is to sketch in a few words a history crammed with facts and rich in events. An estate of the Montmorencys, and afterwards of the Condés, by the 17th century Chantilly had achieved such perfection both in its buildings and gardens as caused Madame de La Fayette to

The Château of Chantilly.

exclaim that, even in her time, " of all the places upon which the sun shines, there is none like it. "

Sylvia's Lake at Chantilly.

It is a fact that even nowadays, though one no longer hears the weeping fountains which, in Condé's time, " were never silent day or night, " a visit to Chantilly astounds one by so much magnificence, such consummate and precise order in the arrangement of the buildings

The Château of Chantilly.

and gardens. They were almost ruined during the Revolution, but with the exception of the *Capitainerie*, built by Jean Bullant, they were entirely restored by the architect Daumet between 1876 and 1882, by order of the Duc d'Aumale. A visit to the galleries, apartments, library and collections of Chantilly cannot fail to astonish the art-lover. The gallery " in which are painted the exploits of M. le Prince, " in part by Sauveur Lecomte, a pupil of Vandermeulen, the *Santuario* in which are shown two fine Raphaels, as well as the rare miniatures of Jehan Fouquet; the *Three Graces* and the *Virgin of the House of Orleans*, the collection of engraved gems, the monkey salon painted by Christophe Huet in the style of Gillot, in short, a profusion of masterpieces of every age and school, lend the whole of that part of the interior of Chantilly known as the Musée Condé a splendour and brilliance which make this

Chantilly. In the Museum.

Raphael. The Three Graces.

Museum not only one of the finest in France, but one of the richest in Europe.

A visit to the Grand Degré (central flight of steps), to the Allée des Philosophes, beloved of Santeul and La Bruyère, a pause at the Château of Enghien, a walk to the Hamlet, form with the pilgrimage to the Maison de Sylvie, a necessary accompaniment to an excursion to Chantilly. We now know who was called Sylvie : namely, Marie-Félice des Ursins, Duchesse de Montmo-

Chantilly. Le Cabinet des Singes.

rency, at the beginning of the 17th century. It was to this hospitable princess, who gave him shelter at Chantilly in a pavilion which once stood on the site of the modern hunting-box in this corner of the park, that the poet Théophile de Viau dedicated the tuneful and touching verses which were to save his unhappy memory from oblivion.

Nattier. M^lle de Clermont by the lake at Chantilly.

It was the name of another Sylvie, who was neither princess nor queen, that lent a fresh grace to this spot in the 19th century. It was that of the pretty lacemaker whom Gérard de Nerval knew, and who, as he tells us in *Les Filles du Feu*, ended by marrying the "*grand Frisé*", a pastrycook at Dammartin. Hence the lovely route so often followed by Gérard from Mortefontaine through Othis (a little village in which the Church boasts a remarkable Renaissance doorway), to that part of the plateau

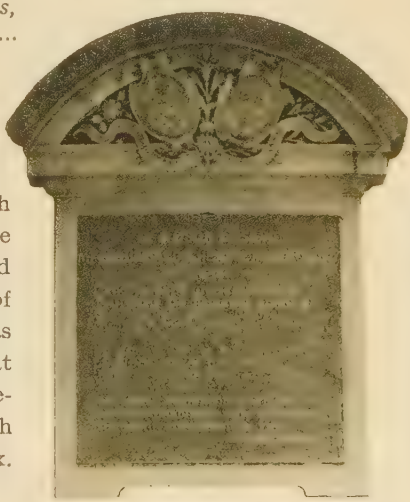
Lake of Commelles. Château de la Reine Blanche.

where the Goële rears its first bastions.

A Dammartin, l'y a trois belles filles,
l'y en a z'une plus belle que le jour...

(At Dammartin, there are three pretty girls, one of them lovelier than the day.)

Thus runs another of those French songs of the Valois, of which the wandering poet loved to write down the popular tunes as he passed by. But at Dammartin, a land of village balls and archery, there was yet another object of interest at that time, namely, the uncomfortable stage-coach with it ancient panels, in which Nerval sometimes drove to Meaux.



Maison de Sylvie.
Memorial Tablet.

To do so he quitted the Valois, and even the district of the Goële, and entered the Multien; but the Multien, a land of corn, cattle and pastures, already forms part of Brie. We have sojourned a short space at Chantilly; we would like to linger there, not only to enjoy and learn the lovely collections but to wander in the neighbouring forest. Chantilly is the great horse racing and training centre of France. How often have we seen groups of mounted jockeys whose horses paw the ground with desire to show their paces in the fragrant underwood. And here also all Paris flocks to witness the most popular of all sports, racing.

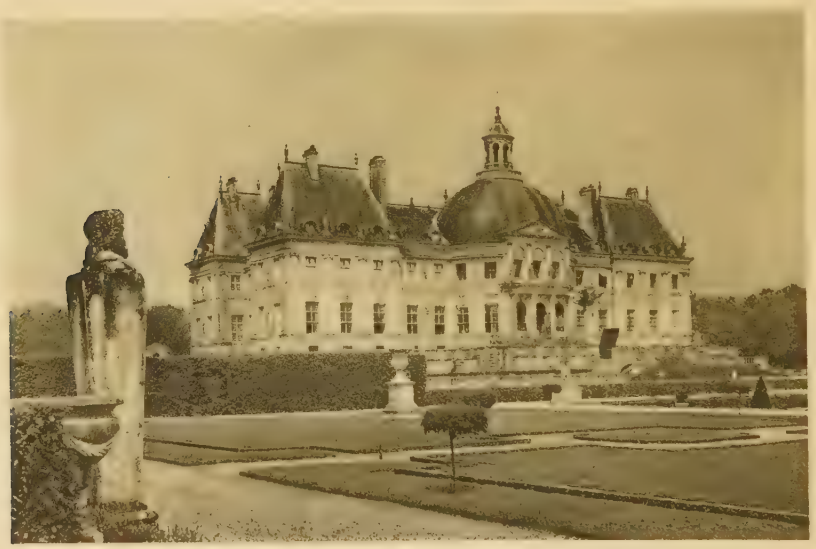
Othis.

Château of Vaux-le-Vicomte.

CHAPTER VIII

Brie and the Gâtinais.
From Vaux-le-Vicomte to Fontainebleau.
Fontainebleau, the Château and forest.
Moret and the Valley of the Loing.

WHETHER it be in the Multien (to the north of Meaux), the Montois (Donne, Marie-en-Montois, Saint-Loup-de-Naud, above Bray-sur-Seine), the Provinois (Provins) or simply in Brie (Brie de Champagne or Brie de l'Ile-de-France) this country fertile in produce owes its worth, and even its natural beauty, to its products and soil. The plaintive poet Hégésippe Moreau realised this as he wandered along the Voulzie at Provins. And so it is Brie, the land of fruits and flocks, Brie, sacred to



Château of Vaux-le-Vicomte.

shepherds and their sheep, which is reflected in his songs, where corn and forget-me-nots are entwined together :

Amour à la fermière. Elle est
Si gentille et si douce...

(Love to the farmer's wife, she is so charming and so sweet).

But Brie, the land of corn, of little grapes *(chasselas)* of eggs and dairy produce, also contains great arable farms and rivers full of fish : the Ourcq, the Yerre, the Marne, the Petit and Grand Morin; mighty forests with their woodmen, especially at Fontainebleau, Crécy or Armainvilliers; but besides this it has its towns, whether on the banks of the Marne, or, like Melun, on the Seine. Melun, the native town of the kindly Amyot, and a leading centre of the region of Brie, is by no means the most curious of them. Except for the tower of Saint-Barthélemy, its two fine churches, Saint-Aspais and Notre-Dame (the latter on an island bathed by the Seine), Melun has not many curiosities worthy of note.

It is true that its surroundings do much to redeem this lack — not to say poverty. First, to the south, towards Dammarie, where can be seen, through the foliage of the first copses and lofty forest trees, the open arches and fragile Gothic windows of the ancient abbey of Le Lys, built by order of Queen Blanche; and then towards the north, not far from the village of Maincy, watered by the Anqueuil, the château of Vaux-le-Vicomte, immortalised in the prose and verse of La Fontaine, which, in spite of many changes, still retains certain of its ancient features; namely, the imposing plan, the enormous vistas and noble design of its canals and park.

" No garden, " wrote M. Lucien Corpechot in praising the work of Le Nostre, " either at Anet, Liancourt, or Rueil, represents such a well-knit whole (as at Vaux), or gives such an impression of unity. " For here every resource of the gardener and the hydraulic engineer has combined to create all round the buildings designed by Le Vau, a complete scheme of radiating walks, formal gardens, lawns and streams,

Ruined Abbey. Dammarie-les-Lys.

Saint-Loup-de-Naud.

mouth of the Goddess Hortésie by La Fontaine in his *Songe de Vaux*, undertaken at the desire of Fouquet. He also introduces a figure named Palatiane, who is to the palace what Hortésie is to the gardens; and lastly Apellanire, who in lovely verses compares the art of Le Brun, who painted the pictures for the apartments in the palace, to the famous Apelles. But the nymphs of this " enchanted spot, " as M^lle^ de Montpensier called it, had also a part to play. This happened, as we know, after the un-

connected with one another in a geometrical design.

Je donne au liquide
[cristal
Plus de cent formes
[différentes
Et les mets tantôt en
[canal,
Tantôt en beautés
[jaillissantes...

(I lend a hundred different forms to the liquid crystal, sometimes placing it in canals, sometimes making it gush forth in beauty), to quote the verses, in the style dear to Théophile, placed in the

Saint-Loup-de-Naud. Stone Carvings.

Saint-Loup-de-Naud.

precedentedly sumptuous fête which the Superintendent of Finances offered to the King, the Queen-mother and the Court at his estate of Vaux. Though, after a performance of *Les Fâcheux*, in which Molière himself took place, this costly entertainment wound up with a triumphant display of fireworks, Louis XIV was offended at such a display of almost royal splendour,

Saint-Loup-de-Naud. The Tympanum.

Cloister of Dannemarie-en-Montois.

far exceeding anything of the kind ever attempted before by a minister. In his annoyance he is said to have turned to Anne of Austria and said, " Ah, won't we make these fellows disgorge ! " From that moment Fouquet's fall was certain. He was arrested at Nantes by M. d'Artagnan, a sub-lieutenant in the company of Musketeers, and shortly afterwards imprisoned. His trial began, and it was then that La Fontaine, in those beautiful verses which remain some of the most touching in all poetry, appealed to the nymphs of the banks of the Anqueuil.

Remplissez l'air de cris en vos grottes profondes
Pleurez, nymphes de Vaux, faites croître vos ondes.

(Fill the air with cries from the depths of your grottoes; weep, ye nymphs of Vaux, let your tears swell your stream).

From Fouquet's family the estate and château of Vaux passed to the Maréchal de Villars, and then to the Choiseul family. They now

belong to M. Sommier, by whose care the structure, which had been greatly neglected, has been restored, and the cascades and lakes, which had become filled up in course of time, reinstated in their former functions.

Had it not been for Colbert's tenacity and the King's suspicions, it would not have been long before the edifice which Fouquet had caused, as it were, to spring out of the earth became the rival of the great royal palace near by in the forest. It is even related that, when Louis XIV left Fontainebleau for Fouquet's house, he came accompanied by a great military display, with Musketeers and Gardes Françaises. The ensigns floated before him, and he was saluted in the streets of Melun, at the Croix du Grand Veneur, and at the Table du Grand Maître, with a roll of drums; so that a note of menace was already to be detected in his attitude. At last, when the court had returned to Fontainebleau, and the trial of Fouquet had begun, the King forgot his cares of state for a moment, for at that time those of his heart were no less urgent.

Fontainebleau. In the Forest.

Fontainebleau. The Château.

Louis XIV's love for M^lle^ de la Vallière was already publicly acknowledged, and was still in all the glory of its early happiness. In her *Memoirs* Madame de la Fayette has left a picture of the charming entertainments which the eagerness and delicacy of the king's passion devised for the " little violet "; not only was there hunting, but excursions in the forest by day and by night, when with Madame, the fragile and tender Madame, " after supper they rode out in light carriages, and drove round the canal to the sound of violins on the soft grass. "

Fontainebleau. A Fountain.

This Grand Canal, which is still in existence, and connects the town of Fontainebleau with the village of Avon, as by a long watery

Fontainebleau. The Stone Staircase.

link, is no less than thirteen hundred yards long by forty-three wide. Together with the lake in the formal garden and the pool full of carp which are alleged to be a hundred years old (though they cannot be, for their ancestors were fished for and eaten by the Cossacks in 1815), this canal cannot fail to provide an argument for those etymologists who poetically maintain that the name Fontainebleau comes from Fontaine-Belle-Eau. Moreover, there still exists a spring in the English garden, between the pond, the riding-school and the court of the Obelisk, whose clear waters, it seems, from the first justified this name.

Henri IV, who did so much for Fontainebleau — not only because he liked staying in the palace, but because the neighbourhood of the forest enabled him to hunt the stag — never referred to the town and château in any other way. Most of the letters which he wrote from there to Gabrielle d'Estrées are dated from " our delightful wilderness of Fontaine-Belle-Eau ". It should be remembered to the honour of this monarch that he spent considerable sums and set on foot enormous works so as to increase the palace to its present spacious proportions.

Fontainebleau. The Château.

In the Park.

To his initiative are due not only the great Galerie de Diane, but the buildings bordering the Place d'Armes, and forming the Cour des Offices, the dome crowning the gateway which connects this Cour des Offices with the Cour Ovale, the buildings forming the Cour des Princes, and lastly, on the garden, towards the Grand Canal, that Jardin du Tibre, which replaced Francis I's former Jardin du Roi. It was this latter prince who had first set the seal of royalty upon the palace. Many sovereigns before him, from St. Louis to Louis XII, had visited this great hunting country and been pleased to spend some time at Fontainebleau. But it was Francis I who, by his enlightened taste for the arts, his understanding of building, and his generous munificence, caused not only the palace but the town to rise from the ground. As early as the 16th century, indeed, the town was so transformed that Brantôme, who visited it later, was never tired of admiring these houses, " so pretty, so charming and so neatly appointed, " of which a certain number had already been built. As for the palace, it was again Francis who was responsible for its earliest development.

Fontainebleau. The Francis I Gallery.

We know what it was like, and how all the grand and beautiful features of this residence, planned in the style of the Renaissance, were built by Francis's order : for instance, the Cour Ovale, the chapel of Saint-Saturnin, the Salle des Fêtes, the Galerie de François Ier, the Cour du Cheval Blanc. The last-named, which faces the town almost opposite the Rue Royale, was given the name of Cour des Adieux after the famous and unforgettable episode of August 20, 1814. It was here, in fact, in this courtyard, that the Emperor (who had always loved staying at Fontainebleau, which he had visited

A Corner of the Gallery.

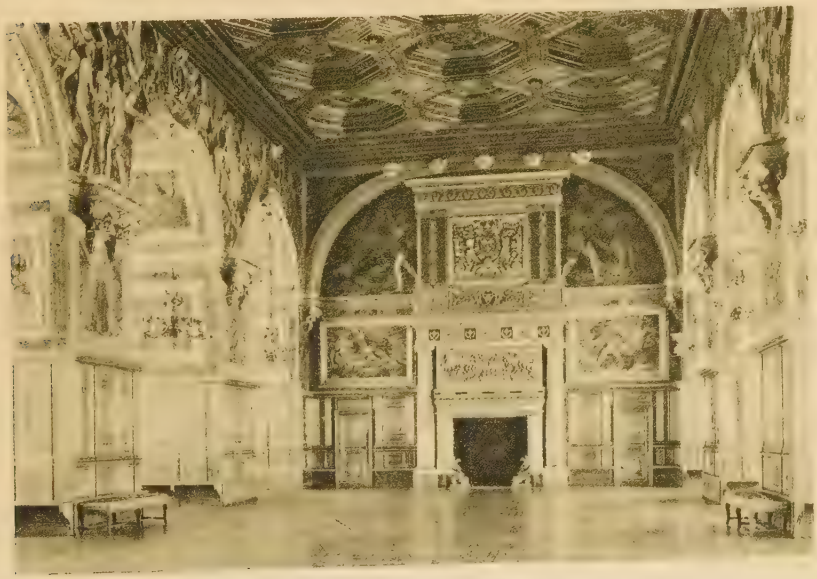
The Throne Room.

several times, not only to receive Pope Pius VII, but also for his own pleasure) took leave of his Guard, and said farewell to his companions in arms. Baron Fain, secretary to the Emperor's household, has left a touching account of this memorable scene. He relates how, when the

The Library.

hour of his exile had struck, Napoleon wished to show himself to his soldiers once more. " Farewell once again, my old companions, " he exclaimed in a voice trembling with emotion. Then, on seeing General Petit coming towards him, bearing the standard of the Guard, he clasped the General to his heart and kissed the folds of the flag. " Farewell, " he said once more, " May this kiss sink into your hearts ! " The whole Guard was in tears. At last the carriage started, carrying off to Elba the Napoleon whom we have already met at St. Cloud, Compiègne, La Malmaison, and the village of Fromenteau near Juvisy, and whose memory still dominates this old palace almost despotically.

The palace is fair to look upon, seen through a screen of forest trees,



In the Henri II Gallery.

Detail from Francis I Gallery.

either from the top of Mont-Chauvet, or of the Mont Aigu. And how can we fail to praise the splendour of the forest itself, with its chaos of rocks, its banks of sand, its wild gorges, the splendour of its plantations, its fine old trees, its slumbering pools haunted by elves and fairies ? By making long excursions across the forest, wandering from Sannois to Milly and Barbizon, from Bois-le-Roi to Marlotte, the tourist will learn to know the Valley of the Salle, to discover Cuvier-Châtillon, the Gorges of

Nemours. The Loing and the Château.

Apremont and Franchard on the one hand, and the fine oak-woods, the areas cleared by felling, the long rocks and eagle's nests on the other.

Such is the aspect of this vast wooded mass, which used to extend as far as the Essonnes, and lies between the Seine, the Loing, the Fusain and the Ecole. Here begins the old Gâtinais, a land fragrant with heather and fa-

Château-Landon.

mous for its honey. We ought to visit Malesherbes, on the borders of this region, with its old château and walks, and La Ferté-Alais on the Essonnes; besides the noble residence of Courances, on the Ecole, between Milly and its old wooden market, with its formal gardens full of flowers,

Château de Courances-sur-Ecole.

its canals and terrace. From hence we return to the banks of the Fusain, starting from Dordives and approaching it from the plain, by which route we shall obtain a view of the ancient ramparts and old abbey of Château-Landon. But the valley of the Loing, the curve of which closely follows the forest through Grez and Montigny, is the greenest and most varied of those which we have still to visit. Once we have reached Nemours, this valley with its feudal towers, its turreted donjons and magnificent historic residences becomes a resort of fairies and princesses. " Du côté de Paris, mais vers Nemours la blanche, un bouvreuil ce matin a chanté sur la branche. " (On the roads to Paris, towards Nemours the white, a bullfinch was singing this morning on a branch). Nothing

could be prettier than the verses composed by Paul Fort, the author of the *Ballades françaises*, in view of the very banks where the charming Sisley painted his glittering landscapes bathed in light.

Château-Landon. The Church of Notre-Dame.

We find this light again, but tempered, softened and veiled with mist, at Moret, where it bathes the old stones, enfolds the ancient bridges and venerable arcades, and enters the old mills and ancient, time-honoured

Moret.

church. Built at the point where the Orvanne meets the Loing, Moret is a once famous place, whose past is blended with a most harmonious and varied landscape. It is only to be regretted that the delightful house once regarded as the gem of ancient Moret, called the House of Francis I, on which Jean Goujon is said to have worked, has been pulled down and removed to the Cours-la-Reine, Paris — or at least its sculptures have been. Otherwise, side by side with its traces of the feudal age, its fortified gateways and the general aspect of its buildings, Moret would still offer for our admiration this exquisite specimen, this lovely model of a Renaissance dwelling-house. Thus it would have shown us not only the living present, but also the magic of the past and the face of all the centuries. For what else is an old city of the Ile-de-France, what else is the Ile-de-France itself, but history, more history and yet again history, displayed in a setting of peerless verdure, by the edge of the sleeping waters?

The Loing at Moret.

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